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## An examination of the mentoring process: A study of the interaction between mentor and mentee in the context of an adolescent mentor program

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**AN EXAMINATION OF THE MENTORING PROCESS: A STUDY  
OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN MENTOR AND MENTEE IN  
THE CONTEXT OF AN ADOLESCENT MENTOR PROGRAM**

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**EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY**

**DATE OF SUBMISSION : 26.11.2004**



## ABSTRACT

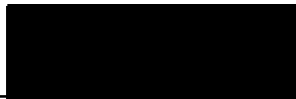
The purpose of this study is to explore the mentoring process, specifically the interactions between mentor and mentee in the context of an adolescent mentor program. The data was gathered through in depth interviews with two mentors and feedback sessions from nineteen mentee participants who were involved in a group mentoring program for young people aged 14-16 years. Several adolescent programs, conducted at local high schools, were included in the study. A qualitative methodology of constructivist hermeneutics was utilised to examine the data and link it to the literature related to the study question. The findings indicated that what occurs during the process of mentoring is multi factorial, complex and diverse. Mentoring takes place in a reciprocal way that is impacted by layered contexts. New data was gathered pertaining to the utility of several theoretical constructs that might help to explain how mentoring occurs. Implications for professionals wishing to work as mentors or wishing to implement mentoring programs are examined in this study. These include the need to recognize and comprehend mentor qualities and styles *vis a vis* various theoretical constructs such as role modelling, identification and intersubjectivity. Cultural, gender and developmental issues related to the process of mentoring are examined. Little research has been identified that brings the narratives of both mentor and mentee together in one study comparatively analysing them. In this regard the present study can be seen as unique and contributing something new to the literature on mentoring.

## Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text;  
or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material

Signature



Date

15. 9. 05

## **Acknowledgements**

There are a number of individuals who have contributed significantly to the completion of this Masters Thesis.

I would like to thank Dr Victoria Banham my Principal Supervisor who allowed me to explore innovative methods of researching and looking at the research question in the true spirit of freedom tempered by a methodical approach. She has provided excellent support and guidance for me since my undergraduate days and through all the stages of this research. I thank Dr Peter Hancock who provided grammatical editing to the thesis.

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Thanks must also go to the three mentors who acted professionally throughout the twelve-month project period and who gave such a quality commitment to their protégés and provided valuable insight into the nature of their work. Finally, I would like to thank the students who offered honest and open feedback about their experiences of the mentoring process.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Mentoring is a highly favoured method in facilitating positive change in younger people. A number of studies identify a variety of interactional models such as social learning, socio-cultural, psychodynamic and ecological theory as explanatory models of mentoring and the positive changes it causes. Despite the use of these models, the literature suggests a noticeable lack of research on both what occurs in the mentoring process and how mentoring works in reality.

Beier, Rosenfield, Spitalny, Zansky, and Bontempo (2000) and MacCallum and Beltman (1999) suggest that mentoring is a complex activity that makes it particularly difficult to study. Key difficulties centre on too great a variety of mentoring styles and programs, whereby mentoring is typically carried out as a part of a larger intervention. Mentors must adopt many roles that affect how mentees relate to them. Furthermore, mentoring is not an isolated activity and is situated in various contextual settings that will impact upon it in various ways.

This study is an exploration into the mentoring process in an adolescent mentoring program. It confirms much of what the literature has to say and provides fresh insight into what occurs during the mentoring process.

#### **1.1 Significance of this study.**

There has been an increase in specialised youth programs in recent times (Hillman, Silburn, Green & Zubrick, 2000). It appears that 'at risk' youth are in need of more intensive support (Beier et al., 2000) as there is an increasing trend for adolescents to engage in high-risk behaviours at younger ages.

There are concerns amongst health and education professionals that the complexities of contemporary Western society are impacting negatively on young people (DeHaan & MacDermid, 1998; Dondero, 1997; Hamburg, 1997). Youth are facing more multivariate and complex issues than their immediate predecessors including high rates of suicide and problems related to sexuality, physical well being and psychological health (Hamburg, 1997; Pascarelli, 1998). Although evidence of these issues is well documented, actual increased pervasiveness of them may be speculative and may demonstrate a continuing lament about youth that has faced generations throughout the ages (Peterson, 1989). Be that as it may, the vulnerability of young people remains a concern as new technologies, population increases and mass media are seen to impact negatively in multifaceted ways on the daily lives of young people. High risk behaviours cost communities and families along number parameters such as increased hospitalisations, the need for greater alcohol and drug treatment agencies and chronic care and increased crime and imprisonment rates (Beier et al., 2000).

A higher level of high school drop out rates is also a growing concern. Mentoring is viewed as one of the most utilised interventions used in recent times to counter increasing high school drop out rates in Western nations (Dondero, 1997) and studies cite numerous mentor programs designed as early interventions with at risk youth (Bein, 1999; Guetzeloe, 1997; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Philip & Hendry, 1996).

Research in the mentoring field however, has largely focused on evaluating mentoring programs and analysing program outcomes or determining the benefits of mentoring (Duhnus Rapp-Paggiucci, 2000; Evans & Ave, 2000; Royse, 1998; Struchen & Porta, 1997). Therefore, it appears that much research is evaluative or tends to be comparative in focus (Barton, Arwood, Jolivette, & Massey, 2000; Evans & Ave, 2000; Struchen & Porta, 1997; Yancey, 1998). Thus, to date, there has been an emphasis on evaluative, comparative and experimental designs that have been utilised to measure the extent to which mentoring works and to examine the benefits of mentoring programs.



However, mentoring should also be viewed as a complex and the relationships between mentor and mentee as multi-factored and Beier et al. (2000) assert that

*Further clarification of these relationships will be useful in our attempts to evolve strategies that use positive adult relationships for the prevention of risk-taking behaviours in adolescents (p.331).*

Evans and Ave (2000:42) contend that ...*Mentoring has typically been advocated with little consideration of the psychological mechanisms underlying it as a means of social influence\**. Royse (1998) points out that no data exists defining the quality of the mentoring relationship. Similarly, Bein (1999) states that nothing is said about the *essence* of the mentoring experience. The very nature of the mentoring relationship itself raises difficulties for research and there should be a greater focus on processes and outcomes of mentoring rather than on effectiveness and efficiency of programs that include mentoring as a component (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999).

Much of the literature affirms that mentoring does not happen in isolation but is embedded in social and cultural contexts. That context is often referred to as the ecological, socio-cultural or social learning space (Dansky, 1996; Hausfather, 1996; Mahn, 1999; Trickett, 1997). The literature has not, however, gone into any depth on the issues of the social context of mentoring, although components of that context are noted.

The significance of this study was the intention of confirming the importance of the contexts in which mentoring takes place and concerns itself with what occurs between the mentor and mentees in a specific context (being group settings in schools). Furthermore, no research has been identified bringing the narratives of both mentor and mentee together in one study and comparatively analysing them. In this regard the present study can be viewed as unique and contributing something new to the literature on mentoring.

## **1.2 Back ground and setting of study.**

At the time of this study the researcher worked as a counsellor/educator at a

\* NB. Directly quoted text will be presented in italics rather than in quotation marks.

community alcohol and drug counselling service. It was in that context that the researcher identified the need for support programs for at risk adolescents aged 13 to 16 years. These youth were considered at risk of school failure because of problematic drug and alcohol use. The aim of the program was to help the students explore their problems and learn new and more effective ways of dealing with them. The proposal to undertake such programs was submitted by the researcher to the Gordon Reid Foundation and was subsequently funded for a twelve month period between October 2001 and October 2002.

The style of program that was considered the most appropriate was based on the researcher's analysis of several current and past Western Australian youth programs. Based on that research the program that was developed consisted of six facilitated, positive and interactive two hour life skills sessions delivered in school settings. The most efficacious format was considered to be a group format consisting of mentors and mentees.

Applications for the mentors were sought from the alcohol and drug field, mostly through word of mouth. Criteria for the mentor positions were that the applicants must have had experience in working with at risk youth and possess skills in working with alcohol and other drug problems. Applicants were interviewed by the researcher, a colleague at the agency and a professional from outside of the agency. As it happened the mentors selected were one female Aboriginal Australian and a male Caucasian, both of whom were trained Youth Workers.

The agency where the researcher worked had been involved with several schools in the region. As a result health workers from these schools heard about the funded mentoring program and they in turn contacted the agency as they identified groups of youth in need, usually of around eight to ten students, and asked for the program to be delivered to these groups.

The mentors were provided with a range of training including train the trainer, group facilitation and specialised therapeutic training sessions with a specialist youth psychologist to prepare them for the mentoring role. The mentors were informed that the delivery of the sessions was to be semi structured and that they would act as mentors for the duration of their employment. Essentially their role was mentors

within the group sessions, however, on some occasions, both of these mentors were accessed by individual participants outside of the group settings. The mentors received a manual with an outline of session content including self awareness, relationships, conflict resolution/problem solving, community and culture - drug awareness, choices and decisions, life/work orientation. Procedures and protocols on working with schools and other agencies were included in the manual. The mentors were accountable to the researcher as the coordinator of the program.

The identified students (mentees) and mentors were given a separate room at the relevant schools to work from during the school term. Delivery of the program was variable to meet the needs of the students. For example, the program was delivered twice to the same group of students and for another group it was delivered over a ten week period instead of six weeks. The programs were designed for mixed gender groups although, again to meet student needs, some groups that started out as mixed gender were divided into all male and all female groups and then regrouped again later in the program delivery cycle.

The majority of the programs were co facilitated by both mentors. The groups that were divided because of gender issues were mentored by a mentor of the same gender. The male mentor delivered eight programs and the female mentor delivered ten programs prior to their final interview. The former left after eight months and another Aboriginal male Youth Worker was employed to take his place. The new worker and the female mentor delivered two more programs at a school where the former male mentor had not been involved.

Five schools and seventy six students participated in ten programs over a twelve month period. At the end of the twelve month period the funding for the project ceased and alternative funding was not found. Data for this study was gained through four interviews with the two mentors and feedback from nineteen students who participated in the programs.

### **1.3 The Study**

This study sought to examine the experience of mentors and mentees in several adolescent groups where participants ranged from thirteen to sixteen years of age.

For the purpose of this study, mentoring will be defined as a process where the mentor is viewed as

*...one who listens to, cares for, gives advice to, and shares information and life/career experiences with another, especially a young person requiring assistance* (Dondero, 1997:882).

The role of the mentor is identified in the literature as someone who is a friend, teacher, role model, advisor and guide but somehow more than the sum of all these parts (Aagaard & Hauer, 2003; Brad, 2002; Tobin, 2004; Yancey, 1998). Throughout this study the term mentee and protégé will be used interchangeably as there is no consensus as to which term is more suitable.

The benefits of implementing mentoring programs with young people are identified in the literature (Barton-Arwood, Jolivet & Massey, 2000; Evans & Ave, 2000; Royse, 1998). However, while many studies indicate that mentoring is efficacious more studies are needed to explore why this is so (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Royse, 1998). Several key domains identified in the literature as explanatory of the process of mentoring are social learning, socio-cultural, psychodynamic and ecological theory (Evans & Ave, 2000; Dansky, 1996; Dondero, 1997; Trickett, 1997; Wang & Paine, 2001; Yancey, 1998). Constructs such as role modelling, identification, socialisation, zone of proximal development and inter-subjectivity are identified as the mechanisms of how and why mentoring happens. Distinctions are made between role modelling and mentoring and the latter is viewed as providing much more than the former in terms of mentoring roles (Aagaard & Hauer, 2003; Yancey, 1998).

From the outset the researcher acknowledges that interpretations of data will rest upon certain biases that the researcher brings to the study. However, biases are not necessarily obstacles to research if they can be seen as ways in which we encounter the world in our experiences. They can bring meaning to the research if the reader can trace and account for them. As Koch suggests *Readers may not share the author's interpretation but they should be able to follow the way in which the author came to it* (1994:977). The researcher will, however, remain aware of the possibility

that biases may impact upon research findings and will endeavour to conciliate these at all times.

#### **1.4 The Questions.**

The purpose of the study was to examine how mentoring happens and to clarify what occurs in the mentoring process.

The primary question of the study, therefore, is

- i) What occurs during the process of mentoring particularly in the interactions between mentor and mentee in an adolescent mentor program?

Secondary questions are

- ii) What occurs in the mentoring relationship with particular attention to the constructs of role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity (considered as explanatory of the ways in which mentoring occurs).
- iii) Can anyone be a mentor?
- iv) How do mentor and mentee descriptions of the same process compare?

The primary research question is seen as important to the evolving research on mentoring (Bein, 1999; Evans & Ave, 2000; MacCallum & Belman, 1999; Royse, 1998). How that question is related to the significance of this study is outlined in Section 1.1 above.

There are a number of secondary questions that the study addressed. The first secondary question focuses on constructs that are drawn from several theoretical domains that are utilised as explanations of how mentoring occurs. Those domains are social learning, socio-cultural theory, ecology theory and psychoanalytic theory. Role modelling has been frequently cited as explanatory of how mentoring occurs and is one of the primary constructs of social learning theory (Dansky, 1996; Dondero, 1997; Evans & Ave, 2000; Goodlad, 1979; Tobin, 2004). Context or

ecology, and hence culture, are also identified and often cited in the literature as impacting upon the mentoring process. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory is also identified as particularly relevant to this study (Evans & Ave, 2000; Gutzeloe, 1997; Philip & Hendry, 1996; Wang and Pain, 2001). The concepts of identification, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity are identified as salient constructs in what occurs between individuals in interactive situations such as mentoring (Evans & Ave, 2000; Forman, Minnick & Stone, 1993; Stremmel & Fu, 1993). The theoretical domain from which these constructs are drawn is psychoanalysis (Evans & Ave, 2000; Litowitz, 1993). This first secondary question will be used to supplement the answer to the primary question.

The second secondary question asks "can anyone be a mentor?" MacCallum and Beltman (1999) claim that *mentors could be just about anyone with the patience, time and energy to empathise with and assist a young person* (p. 10). In Dondero (1987) mentors were seen as any caring person who forms a special relationship with a young person. Mentoring is considered a grassroots movement (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999) and it is intuitively seen to benefit mentees (Beier et al., 2000). Sinitar (1999) states that mentoring is a timeless process the elements of which reside in our hearts. It transforms us in a holistic way, in body, mind and spirit. There is also a pejorative view where some literature on mentoring is construed as *shady practices for getting on in the world* or being a *moralizing oversimplification* (Tobin, 2004). It is good practice for professionals in the field who might wish to mentor or to set up mentoring programs, to differentiate between overly simplistic and more sound understandings of how mentoring occurs.

The third secondary question asks how the experiences of the mentors compare to those of the mentees. Several studies provided a basis for the nature of this question and were reliant on feedback from mentees to provide evidence of the benefits of the mentoring process for them (Beier et al., 2000; Gutzeloe, 1997; Philip & Hendry). Mentoring is seen as a two way process and therefore it makes good sense to gain feedback from both parties in this complex process. This question will act as a validity check for themes from mentors and mentees as well as adding depth to the answer to the primary question. The final question could be viewed as providing triangulation in terms of research outcomes and this should be stated here as well.

## **1.5 Study sample.**

The primary and secondary questions identified in 1.4 above are explored using a small sample of mentors and mentees as outlined in the Background 1.2. Questions of validity and generalisability of the studies' findings require due consideration. Qualitative methods may deliver complex data obtained from much smaller numbers of people or a relatively small sample size. This can increase understanding about what is happening within a complex process such as mentoring but will decrease generalisability of that understanding. The method of 'knowing' employed for this study makes no claims to being absolute and objective; however, neither is it relativistic. The study, although small, is deemed credible and its findings relevant due to the in-depth qualitative nature of the data and supporting reviewed literature. An assumption for the researcher is that findings such as these, no matter how small the sample, will always add to an ever increasing body of knowledge in the area of mentoring.

## **1.6 Thesis Structure**

Chapter Two, a Literature review, examines the theoretical underpinnings of mentoring. However, in this chapter, while indicators are presented in the literature as to how mentoring might work, no one study can be cited which comprehensively articulates the full meaning and mechanisms of mentoring. To further complicate this, no research could be found that related directly to the primary research question in this thesis namely, what occurs in the mentoring process. This chapter examines the literature where several explanatory models or constructs are identified as to how mentoring occurs. Contextual issues and developmental, cultural and gender issues for adolescents are examined. A conceptual guideline for this study is outlined.

Chapter Three, Methodology, is divided into two sections. Section One explains the paradigm for the method of inquiry that this study utilises. It became particularly important to the researcher to be quite clear regarding the choice of paradigm and to explain why the interpretive framework is justified in the study of human interactivity. Section Two overviewed the design, procedures and method of analysis of the findings of the study.

Chapter Four provided a summary of the findings. In this chapter, categories were drawn from content analysis of the participant's data and these were then clustered into several themes based on variables relative to either the mentor or mentee.

Chapter Five discusses the mentor and mentee data and relates that discussion back to the literature. The mentor and mentee themes that were identified in Chapter Four were individually examined in this chapter. Those themes were then comparatively analysed where similarities and differences between mentor and mentee data were highlighted and discussed. A comparative analysis of the pre and post program mentor interview data is utilised to answer the question "can any one be mentor?"

Chapter Six provides summarised answers to the research questions with implications for future research. Limitations to the study are outlined and discussed. Recommendations are made for further research. An important feature of this study is that it contributes i. a richer way to research where meaningfulness rather than generalisability of the findings will lead to a further understanding of the question/s at hand.



## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW.

Mentoring is a complex process that can take many forms. This chapter will review the literature on the mentoring process and examines how the process of mentoring is influenced by such factors as developmental issues for youth, gender, age, culture and other variables. Literature specific to the context of adolescent mentoring programs was examined. Mentoring in other contexts including business, community and tertiary settings was also examined where elements common to several mentoring styles were identified.

Indicators were identified in the literature as to how mentoring occurs however, no single study could be cited that comprehensively investigates the full meaning and mechanisms of mentoring. To further complicate this, no research could be found that related directly to the primary research question in this thesis namely, what occurs during the process of mentoring particularly in the interactions between mentor and mentee in an adolescent mentor program? This gap is indicative of the need for studies such as the present one. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on the impact of context on the mentoring process therefore this chapter examines the importance of ecology and contexts of mentoring.

Several constructs identified within the theoretical domains of social learning, socio-cultural and psychoanalytic theory are utilised to explain how mentoring occurs. However, no one study examines the use of those constructs in a comprehensive and unified way. These theoretical domains and constructs relevant to mentoring are therefore examined in this study. Hermeneutic thinking as a conceptual guideline is examined as an aid to surmount conceptual incommensurability between these domains and constructs.

This literature review is comprised of four Sections.

Section One will review the literature on the mentoring process. This section examines how the process of mentoring is influenced by such factors as developmental issues for youth, gender, age, culture and other variables.

Section Two examines how learning occurs in the mentoring process and will focus on presenting constructs identified within the theoretical domains of social learning, socio-cultural and psychoanalysis in order to explore how those constructs apply to mentoring.

Section Three discusses how contexts impact on mentoring.

Section Four pulls together the issue examined in Sections One, Two and Three and discusses the importance of hermeneutic thinking as a conceptual guideline in examining what happens in mentoring and provides a summary of the evidence presented in the preceding sections.

## **2.1 SECTION ONE: MENTORING PROCESS EXPLORED.**

### **2.1.1 Mentoring explained.**

Mentoring is commonly conceived of in terms of traditional ideology. It is usually thought of in its classic form where a knowledgeable, usually older adult or peer acts as a father figure, role model, teacher, counsellor, trusted advisor, challenger and encourager towards a less knowledgeable younger person (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Guetzloe, 1997). A mentor can be thought of as a guide, supporter, one providing hope, new ideas, a caring or mature person (Pascarella, 1998; Dondero, 1997).

The concept of mentoring youth, in particular, is seen as appealing and is intuitively viewed as benefiting young people. However, the rhetoric appears to have outpaced the evidence of its efficacy in making a difference to adolescents' lives (Beier et al.,

2000; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). It is viewed as a grassroots level movement and a general panacea for current prevailing ills of young people. Evans and Ave (2000) suggest that mentoring is becoming an *increasingly popular strategy for addressing the needs of young people who are considered at risk for failure in mainstream contexts* (P. 41). Traditional social supports and structures are seen to be deteriorating with many statistics indicating ever increasing high rates of school drop outs, teen pregnancies, serious emotional and behavioural problems and increased drug abuse (Bein, 1999; Dondero, 1997; Dulmus & Rapp-Paglicci, 2000; Hamburg, 1997).

Increasingly, supportive interventions are being sought to delay or prevent further deterioration of the mental and physical health of young people (Pascarelli, 1998). Such interventions include community partnerships (Hamburg, 1997) and enhancing resiliency and protective factors around young people (Krovetz, 1999). Mentoring is cited as one of the key shortterm interventions in delaying or decreasing high risk behaviours in adolescents (Beier et al., 2000; Krovetz, 1999; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Philip and Hendry, 1996; Ramey & Ramey, 1998).

Mentoring seems to evoke notions of special relationships, relationships that are unique and somewhat personal. Mentoring is typically viewed as one - to - one relationship or relationships that develop in group settings. While the mentor incorporates a range of varied roles such as modelling, facilitating, advising, tutoring, friendship and counselling it is apparent that it can be either, and or, all of these but more than the sum of them (Brad, 2002; Tobin, 2004). Some studies suggest that there is poor definitional clarity of mentoring but that it usually involves a powerful emotional interaction between an older and younger person and facilitates the younger to move towards mastery of the adult world (Brad, 2002; Philip and Hendry, 1996). Mentors can also be elders in a community, or respected others, older family members, professionals, more experienced work colleagues, peers or classmates. The mentor role may change from situation to situation with subtle nuances between the various roles played in each situation. Mentors are used in schools, universities, workplaces, professional businesses or in areas of social need (Guetzloe, 1997; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Philip & Hendry, 1996 Struchen & Porta, 1997; Yancey, 1998).

Philip and Hendry (1996:190) challenge the idea of a single form of mentoring asserting that in the *changing social, political and economic climate, there may be a variety of forms and these in turn may support a diversity of social strategies on the part of young people*. MacCallum and Beltman (1999), rather than providing a simplistic definition of mentoring, describe twelve different mentoring models based on varying typological approaches suggesting that there are many more forms of mentoring other than the classical or traditional models usually cited in the literature. Another study describes six different styles of mentoring including classic, long-term, short term, tele-mentoring, long term relationship with a risk taking adult and friend to friend mentoring (Philip and Hendry, 1996). Philip and Hendry also point out that the traditional style of mentoring is losing significance in contemporary society and others note problems with the classic type, such as finding people who can commit long term and keeping those people, costs involved, and trying to match mentor and mentee (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Therefore various hybrid and evolving styles of mentoring that differ from the classic style of one to one mentoring are identified throughout the literature.

Stage models of mentoring have also been identified and analysed (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Pascarelli, 1998; Smith, McAllister & Crawford, 2001; Wang and Pain, 2001). Pascarelli (1998) identified a four-stage model through which the mentee/protégé grows from a state of dependence through a series of experiences that enhance specific skills, attitudes or habits, and moves finally towards responsibility and independence. These stages are classified as: Initiation *I am here for you*; Cultivation *I believe in you*; Transformation *I will not let you fail* and Separation *You have the power* (Pascarelli, 1998). In their study, Wang and Pain (2001), describe how mentoring is implemented in a variety of ways at different times and where the mentor identifies where the mentee is in the zone of proximal development (as discussed in 2.2.4) and helps her work through from lesser to greater degrees of their professional development.

Various purposes of mentoring have also been identified in research. Jacobi, in MacCallum and Beltman (1999), has outlined several theoretical perspectives underpinning mentoring functions being, (i) directly assisted learning, (ii) academic and social integration, (iii) social support, and (iv) social and cognitive development. It appears that there are not only a wide variety of mentoring styles, that may be

further classified as formal or informal, natural or structured but also a broad range of purposes for mentoring exist.

To summarise, the literature indicates that mentoring can take on many forms and styles. Mentors come from a wide variety of formal and informal backgrounds and operate in numerous fields of human interaction including schools, businesses, families or other settings of social need. Not only are there various typologies, forms and stages of mentoring itself, it is suggested in the literature that mentoring is an evolving and dynamic process where both the mentor and mentee adjust to one another. The literature suggests that mentor and mentee interact with and evaluate each other in many ways. In short mentoring is viewed as a complex process (Beier et al., 2000). Some authors suggest that these interactions are not always beneficial or positive and further research into these phenomena is called for (Evans & Ave, 2000; Struchen & Porta, 1997). Hence there is a need for studies such as the present one to examine the process of mentoring and the interactions between mentor and mentee.

### **2.1.2 Efficacy of Mentoring**

Numerous studies reviewed are concerned with the efficacy of mentoring and determining its outcomes for young people (Barton-Arwood, Jolivet & Massey, 2000; Dansky, 1996; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Royse 1998). Benefits of mentoring for young people include fostering of self-esteem, role modelling of social skills, opportunities to practice social and problem solving skills and exploring life and career options (Barton-Arwood et al., 2000).

While much of the literature indicates efficacy of mentoring programs, Royse (1998), suggests that research regarding the effects of the mentoring relationship is lacking. Other studies suggest that there is little evidence of the efficacy of mentoring (Beier et al., 2000). They argue that because mentoring is a varied and complex activity it is difficult to develop effective methodologies that can cope with all the components to the process (Evans & Ave, 2000; Royse, 1998). Royse (1998) in his evaluation of the highly regarded Big Brother/Big Sister mentoring programs in various states in the USA states that not enough empirical studies of mentoring have been undertaken to make any empirical conclusions. Royse also indicates the necessity for qualitative studies and points out that no data is available on the quality of the mentoring

relationship. Bein (1999) emphasises that qualitative studies will make significant contributions to research and also points to a lack of rigorous research in studies on mentoring. Many studies are evaluations of established mentoring programs and Royse's evaluation of the Big Brother/Big Sister program was typical of such evaluative studies. However, his argument that more qualitative and in depth studies are required supports this research, its methods and primary questions.

There appears to be a kind of idealisation of mentoring where some researchers view mentoring as a general panacea of many of Western society's problems with youth. Mentoring is viewed as a timeless process that can support others in holistic ways in body, mind and spirit (Sinitar, 1999). Dondero's (1997) study called 'Mentors: Beacons of hope' replete with sweeping statements like *The problems facing American youth seem overwhelming* (p. 884) are illustrative of this idealisation of mentoring. There may be political pressures, in particular in education departments, to see positive results in programs targeting at risk youth. As Tobin (2004) suggests, it is difficult not to become cynical, and yet much in the mentoring process remains appealing for those who work with adolescents whether at risk or not. Tobin (2004) also suggests that there is a tendency for *overmoralising simplification* in some of the literature on mentoring. The current study hopes to lend credibility to the notion of mentoring as an appropriate intervention with at risk youth where the processes of mentoring are more clearly identified and articulated.

Extraneous forces in field studies are seen to impact on dependent variables (Dansky, 1996). Whilst Dansky does not outline what these forces are, others do state that controls are difficult to develop in the field and factors such as the age of youth at the time of intervention, culture and gender are important variables that do not seem to have been controlled for in many of the studies (Evans & Ave, 2000; Royse, 1998). This thesis, therefore, seeks to examine, albeit in a limited way, the role of such variables as adolescent developmental issues, culture and gender that might impact on the process of mentoring.

Issues that affect the mentoring relationship include limitations on the strength of that relationship due to behavioural and emotional problems in both mentor and mentee. Further, limitations of the effectiveness of mentoring with adolescents at risk include factors such as individual resiliency, social/physical environment, more powerful other

peers, duration of positive effects, consistency and durability of mentor/mentee contact and social and emotional availability of mentors or mentees (Royse, 1998).

Studies on group mentoring are scarce and evidence of efficacy of this style is lacking (Dansky, 1996; Yancey, 1998). Dansky suggests that group mentoring is a new construct and Yancey calls her version of this type of role-modelling a *hybrid role modelling approach* (Yancey, 1998). Yancey (1998) cites numerous reasons supporting the adoption of group mentoring as opposed to other forms and these relate directly to this thesis as this researcher feels group mentoring is very important in an era of scarcity of volunteers, cost effective search for methods and the needs of fund strapped organisations.

A positive outcome for group mentoring is the retention of the mentors due to less burn out and less emotional strain. If a connection is, for one reason or another, not being made with one mentee then it may well be established with another; this becomes then more rewarding for the mentor and mentee alike. Yancey (1998) supports the notion of group therapy, which makes use of the power of peer interaction and promotes bonding within the group. Dansky (1996) draws analogies between one to one mentoring and group mentoring such as exchange of ideas and information and exchange of affect and social networking. Socialisation is made easier in a group context. Yancey (1998) suggests that the short term efficacy and benefits for participants of this approach are legion. However, the interrelationships between mentors and mentees and the unique nature of mentoring are seen as requiring further studies. The present study goes some way to providing an enhanced discourse around the issues identified above by various researchers in the field.

The issue of one to one mentoring versus group mentoring has been identified above as important to the question of how the mentoring process occurs. Other central issues include role modelling, identification, social ecology, peer mentoring and structured as opposed to natural settings. The ensuing discussion on gender and other variables, although brief, will be seen as relevant in addressing the study question.

### 2.1.3 Gender and culture as impacts on mentoring.

The present review cannot exhaustively explore issues of gender and culture or any other variables that may have some bearing on how mentoring happens but will, nevertheless, examine such variables briefly. This statement should be qualified further by saying that little actual literature exists on the effects of these variables upon the process of mentoring (Topping & Whitely, 1993). Despite the dearth of literature, MacCallum and Beltman (1999) indicate that issues of gender, ethnicity, culture and socio-economic status should be considered when matching mentor to mentee.

Yancey (1998) states that same ethnic backgrounds for mentor and mentee will enhance the development of stable identity for ethnically marginalised young people in foster care. Similarly Evans and Áve (2000) and Smith et al., (2001) argue for the case of *cultural empowerment* to counteract powerful negative ethnic stereotypes of some minority groups and an inability of minority group professionals to find mentors and role models to identify with. Little of this is empirically proven and Struchen and Porta (1997) state outright that mentors *do not have to be matched with youth on the basis of race, socio-economic level or any other variable* (p. 24). Furthermore, and highlighting equivalence in the literature, Smith et al., (2001) also suggest that cross cultural mentoring could afford opportunity for cross cultural collaboration and sharing of different beliefs and practices.

Typically, the classic style of one to one mentoring, as exemplified in the Big Brother Big Sister scheme, will gender match mentor with mentee (Royse, 1998). Some research is equivocal about the need for gender matching in mentoring (Evans & Ave, 2000; Yancey, 1998). However, other research emphasises that in some professions such as nursing cross gender mentoring can be a hindrance to the process because of gender bias, discomfort for one sex dealing with the other and stereotyping (Smith et al., 2001). Issues with cross- gender matching, in the business world, at least, have been identified and in some case considered inappropriate (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999).

Tater (1998) in a study investigating secondary school student's perceptions of teachers as significant others found that girls more than boys seek confirmation,



support and personal and affective help from teachers. Almost stereotypically interactions between boys and teachers were around behavioural issues with *teachers indicating that boys are distinguished by behaviours such as weeping, bullying, rudeness, being talkative and easily frightened* (Tater, 1998:224).

Other research, however has suggested that it is healthy to provide both male and female influences for young people. Evans and Aye (2000) point out that in contemporary society, often with the father figure absent, the mentor, male or female, may stand in as the missing parent. While Yancey (1998) advocates for same ethnic background models, although that study supports exposure to both genders for young people in foster care. Struchen and Porta (1997) state clearly that mentors do not need to be matched on the basis of any variable. Topping and Whitley (1993) found in studies on tutoring effects that cross age but same gender matches had positive outcomes. Ehly and Larsen (1980), on the other hand, found that the same sex of tutor and tutees were not predictive of better outcomes. Liking a tutor was more predictive; however same sex pairing was more likely to produce the effect of a tutee liking a tutor.

In sum, it appears that while some evidence does support same sex/same ethnicity mentoring many studies are ambiguous about the outright need for it. Some authors felt strongly about the need for same ethnic background mentors but this was on the basis of belief that empowerment of marginalised youth required similar ethnicity of mentors rather than empirically tested efficacy of same ethnicity mentoring per se. Many studies in intervention with young people did not note gender or culture or age as issues salient enough to warrant further investigation or inclusion in their research (Trickett, 1997).

The issues of gender and culture and other variables are relevant to this study's primary and secondary research questions. However, while the issues or variables are discussed and alluded to in this study they will not be dealt with fully. The rationale for the above review of these variables in the literature is that, clearly, they are important in the process of mentoring. Never the less ambiguity remains about exactly how they impact on mentoring therefore the reason these issues will not be dealt with in fully is that a more complete and appropriate treatment of them would require a thesis in its own right.

### 2.1.4 Developmental issues for adolescents.

The relevance of developmental needs and tasks of young people did not appear to be considered as an important issue in the literature examining the mentoring process. However, Philip and Hendry (1996) argue that youth research per se has been criticised for focusing too much on individual development and a lack of focus on the social contexts of youth. The assumptions of Philip and Hendry (1996) are that the developmental needs and tasks of adolescence are quite significant and are viewed as having a bearing on how mentoring happens, in particular for at risk adolescents.

An issue facing youth that was prominent in the literature was young people's need for nurturing, belonging and connection to a suitable significant other. According to Pascarelli (1998) researchers are becoming increasingly

*aware of the extraordinary craving of today's youth for caring, belonging, connectedness and meaning and as a result are reinventing mentoring – a renaissance of one of the oldest natural support relationships dating back to the Greeks. Socio-cultural changes that include diminishing family roles, lack of positive social networks, the transfer of family care taking responsibilities to already over burdened schools and lack of community resources for youth all point more and more to the need for providing youth with more significant others in their lives to guide, support, coach, and in some cases, simply to mentally and physically attend (p. 231).*

Pascarelli goes on to point out that these needs are universal, a position that is amply supported up by others (Dulmus & Rapp-Paggiacci, 2000; Guetzloe, 1997; Peterson, 1989; Trickett, 1997). Peterson asserts that the problems of youth are not only a contemporary phenomenon but have been identified as problems throughout history. It could be argued that a perennial and universal need for adolescents is for a dependable, consistent and positive relationship with at least one other adult (Guetzloe, 1997).

Adolescence has been identified by a range of professionals, parents, practitioners and researchers as an important transitional phase laden with difficulties unique to its

age and stage of development (Gutzeloe, 1997; Peterson, 1989; Schulenberg, Maggs & Hurrelmann, 1997). Transitional tasks for adolescents, according to Schulenberg et al. (1997) include affiliation (relationships and social networks); achievement (work and schooling); and identity transitions (self-concept, ethnic identity). The issue of individual needs and transitions remain relevant in an ever-changing social context. For Schulenberg et al. the agent

*for storm and stress is the interaction between the developing adolescent and his or her changing context, specifically the increased developmental mismatch that may occur as a result of developmental transitions (1997:10).*

This has significant implications for professionals providing interventions for adolescents seen as at risk of developmental failure. Furthermore, there is a commonality here with much of the literature that describes mentoring as contextually embedded in micro and macro level milieus. The micro level might include the immediate psychosocial space in which the mentoring process takes place. The macro level might include the school, for example.

Adolescence is a developmental phase that occurs within a social context. Nevertheless individuals still act as agents of their own development. Nurmi (1997:395) describes a process of self-definition that has also been referred to as identity formation. Erik Erikson (in Peterson, 1989) suggested that the critical task facing youth was the stage he referred to as identity crisis, the resolution of which would be formation of a positive and healthy identity or sense of self as the adolescent moves towards adulthood. This construct is further explored in 2.2.6 below. Further elaborations on the concept of identity formation have recently developed in the field of psychology including constructs such as self-esteem, self-concept, self-identity, possible selves and self-regulation (Nurmi, 1997).

Nurmi (1997) elaborates further on all of these constructs and describes a process of self-definition in terms of developmental transitions. Nurmi (1997) asserts that although environmental factors play an important role in an adolescent's wellbeing and development, young people also construct their own future based on their own goals. Self-definition is based on a process of setting personal goals, planning for achievement of these and evaluating the outcome. Adolescents construct self-schema

through the process of self-definition. Thus, as with social learning, Nunni's notion of self-definition suggests an agency of self in an adolescent's development (1997). The concept of self-definition may well be an adolescent version of creating or elaborating on his or her subjectivity. The point being that despite the disastrous consequences, or positive effects, of some environmental determinants of behaviours, the young person is also on the road to constructing a self.

Another interpretation of adolescent development is social cognitive model of interactive agency (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986) stresses that individuals are neither autonomous arbiters nor are they merely subjects of environmental or contextual forces

*Rather, they serve as a reciprocally contributing influence to their own motivation and behaviour within a system of reciprocal causation involving personal determinants, action and environmental factors (p. 12).*

Peterson (1989) indicates that an adolescent's response to transitional tasks depends on individual and contextual resources available to negotiate those transitions. Hurrelman, Kaufmann and Losel (1987) state that the extent of the impact of transitional challenges depends on the *number, timing and synchronicity of the changes and amount of social support available at the time of the transition* (p. 168).

Literature suggests that developmental issues for adolescents are interwoven with the issues of contextual impacts, identity formation and self as agent in forming a self definition. This section provided an overview of the mentoring process and how such a process can be influenced by a number of variables such as gender, culture and development issues. The following discussion (Section Two) delves further into the literature on mentoring to explore how learning may occur in the mentoring process.

## **2.2 SECTION TWO: LEARNING IN MENTORING.**

The literature suggests that one of the central purposes of mentoring is the transmission of learning from an experienced or more learned person to a less learned

other. The word learning is used because it is one of the most often utilised signifiers that we have for growth, development, movement or shift in levels of functioning. Learning can occur in structured or unstructured settings, for individuals in isolation or in socio-cultural contexts and can be attributable to a number of variables including macro and micro-level availability of opportunity to learn, biological factors including good health, socio-emotional resilience and pre-disposition or motivation to learn. To understand the important role that the learning process plays in mentoring we need first to examine what learning is and secondly how does learning occur in the mentoring situation.

### **2.2.1 What is learning?**

Stevenson (cited in Mussen, 1983) suggests that *A central theme in the history of philosophy and psychology is the relative importance of subjective experience and overt behaviour* (p. 213). Stevenson (cited in Mussen, 1983) and others (Honderich, 1995) state that subjectivity and behaviour are two key aspects of learning and that psychology, it appears, has focused on behaviour almost to the exclusion of subjective experience in this question. It may well be that research around learning has flourished within the behaviourist paradigm because behavioural changes are easy to test and verify. Observable and verifiable behaviour may be helpful when analysing human interactions. However, the complexity of human interaction necessitates a more sophisticated method of inquiry particularly around the notion of the subjective experience.

The assumption, of course, is that there is such a thing as subjectivity. Whatever the case, a problem in describing human interactions is that non-behavioural gains such as sense of self, self-esteem, identity, resilience or growth remain difficult constructs to measure and evaluate (Evans & Ave, 2000; Goodlad, 1979). Mentoring is a process that is made up of more than observable behaviours per se and therefore the present study will, following Stevenson, include discourse on the inter subjective nature of mentoring.

Kuhn (cited in Hacking, 1981) suggests that *on occasions even philosophy will become a legitimate scientific tool, which it ordinarily is not* (p. 25). The problem of incommensurability is then encountered where it is *...impossible to define all the*

*terms of one theory in the vocabulary of the other* (Kulm, 2000a:34). Kuhn suggests that complete incommensurability may be moderated by some overlay of common concepts or vocabulary between disciplines but that there may always be a line that cannot be breached, for example, between human and natural sciences. That is, researchers may always suffer irreconcilable differences in the ways they view subjectivity. For Kuhn one possible solution to this dilemma is the use of *hermeneutic reinterpretation* (refer to Chapter Three). Not one or the other, rather one and the other where validity is not based on how much evidence one can mount against the other view rather that one view can complement the other. This study will therefore utilise the hermeneutic methodology in order to overcome the problems associated with the incommensurability of theoretically disparate constructs that explain how mentoring happens. These constructs will now be examined in the following sections.

### **2.2.2 How learning occurs between mentor and mentee.**

There is a need for further research on what occurs in the mentoring process (Evans & Ave, 2000; Philip & Hendry, 1996), specifically in relation to what is the nature of the mentoring relationship (Bein 1999; Royse, 1998; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Constructs within the theoretical domains of social learning, socio-cultural, ecological theory and psychoanalysis are identified as explanatory of the process of mentoring (Evans & Ave, 2000; Dansky, 1996; Dondero, 1997; Trickett, 1997; Wang & Paine, 2001; Yancey, 1998). These domains and constructs will now be examined.

Why discuss these theoretical domains? Role modelling has been frequently cited as one of the explanations of what occurs between mentor and mentee (Dansky, 1996; Dondero, 1997; Evans & Ave, 2000; Goodlad, 1979; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Tobin, 2004). Role modelling is also seen as one of the primary constructs of social learning theory and that theory is considered to be an important explanatory model for mentoring (Dansky, 1996; Dondero, 1997; Evans & Ave, 2000; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Context or ecology, and hence culture, are often cited as impacting on the mentoring process (Evans & Ave, 2000; Forman et al., 1993; Gutzeloe, 1997; Philip & Hendry, 1996; Trickett, 1997; Wang & Pain, 2001). Constructs, such as zone of proximal development and social origins of thought, from within Vygotsky's

socio-cultural theory are identified in the literature as explaining how mentoring works (Evans & Ave, 2000; Wang & Pain, 2001). Finally, the concepts of identification and inter-subjectivity are identified as important explanatory constructs in examining what occurs between individuals in interactional situations like mentoring (Evans & Ave, 2000; Forman et al., 1993; Litowitz, 1993; Mussen, 1983; Stremmel & Fu, 1993). Literature exploring each of these theoretical domains and how they may add to the exploration of ways in which the mentoring process occurs will now be reviewed.

### 2.2.3 Social Learning Theory

One of the key figures in the research of social learning theory, Albert Bandura (1977) in his own operational definition of this theory asserts that

*...people are neither driven by inner forces nor buffeted by environmental stimuli. Rather psychological functioning is explained in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction of personal and environmental determinants. Within this approach symbolic, vicarious and self-regulatory processes assume a prominent role*  
(p. 11)

In short, learning occurs in specific environments and both the individual and the environment affect each other in a reciprocal manner. Bandura (1986) found limitations to previous learning theories including both the psychoanalytic perspective and the behavioural theories.

The key constructs of social learning theory are reinforcement, role-modelling or observational learning and internal representations of external behaviours (Bandura, 1977). The central tenet of social learning could be said to be modelling whereby behaviours, symbolic or otherwise including speech, are modelled to the child. Bandura (1986) emphasises that learning would be virtually impossible without some significant other first modelling new behaviours, speech or other cultural artefacts.

The mechanism by which learning occurs through modelled behaviour is called observational learning, where the observer learns new behaviours and coincidentally attains new cognitive skills. New behaviours are then maintained, or lost, through inhibitory, motivational or reinforcing effects. In the case of the latter, Bandura was divided as to whether only behaviour which was rewarded, was taken on board or whether individuals *...facilitate learning anticipatorily by enhancing attentional, encoding and rehearsal processes* (Bandura, 1986:77). Social learning theory suggests that external, vicarious and self-generated consequences act to inhibit or enhance learning in an *Interdependence of personal and environmental influences* (Bandura, 1977:195).

Self-efficacy or self-agency is an important concept in social learning and according to Bandura (1986; 1977) individuals review their own behaviour, set goals and reinforce their behaviours. While external or environmental determinants influence and shape learning and behaviour, the individual still makes choices around their actions. Bandura suggests that the individuals' measure of self-efficacy will affect how and what they learn. Individuals will estimate how much effort and persistence is needed for tasks, to make choices *vis a vis* tasks and that this effort can be self-rewarding or self-motivational to produce behaviour rather than simply be stimulated to behave in various ways by external forces (1986:394-5).

Bandura (1986) postulates a triadic model for human behaviour that includes the components of personal cognitive processes and behaviours and environmental determinants. He further suggests that 'fortuitous encounters' may also affect the course of an individual's life. *Knowledge of cognitive and behavioural competencies does not, in itself, tell us much about what course personal lives will take* (Bandura, 1986:31). Chance encounters can have simple or more profound effects on the way people's lives turn out; however, these chance encounters are still subject to the reciprocal influences of social and personal factors.

Thus, according to social learning or social cognitive theory learning in the mentoring process could be explained as occurring as a result of the interdependence of several determinants. These include environmental and individual determinants such as role modelling, self-motivated goal setting and external, vicarious and self-generated reinforcement of behaviours. As mentoring is an interactional contextually



layered activity this thesis will examine how determinants such as described in social learning theory might impact on the mentoring process.

#### 2.2.4 Socio-Cultural Theory.

A second theory that is relevant to mentoring is identified as Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory. One study views this theory as explanatory of the mentoring process but does not elaborate on why this is so (Wang & Paine; 2000). A comprehensive collection of studies on socio-cultural theory and its relation to contextual learning can be found in Forman et al. (1993). Socio-cultural theory is seen as the theoretical cornerstone of peer assisted learning (Forman et al., 1993).

The basic assumptions of socio-cultural theory are

- i) A social or cultural origin of cognitive development or thought.
- ii) A learning space defined as zone of proximal development (zpd)
- iii) Semiotic mediation of *higher mental functions* via the use of cultural tools and signs such as language  
(Forman et al., 1993).

The central premise of socio-cultural theory is that internal psychological processes have their origins in the social world. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that cultural development

*...appears twice, or in two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological category, and then within the child as an intra-psychological category. This pertains equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, to the formation of concepts, and to the development of the will (p. 163).*

Gallimore and Goldenberg (cited in Forman et al., 1993) suggest that this premise has enormous implications, not only for theories of learning but also for research methodology in studies on child development. *Variance within groups means that 'culture' cannot be controlled for or measured as a trait equally applicable to all*

*members of a group...* (Forman et al., 1993:331). Culture is seen as a *shaper and sustainer* of human interactivity and Gallimore and Goldenberg identify the cultural mediators that represent the shift from the cultural to the individual. These include personnel, motives, tasks, scripts, goals/beliefs (Forman et al., 1993). This list would not look out of place in social learning theory demonstrating, at least at the level of this premise, some similarity between social learning and socio-cultural theory. Vygotsky, however, did not see this process simply as a child mimicking culture but rather, that there is a profound shift in the internal world of the child itself. Socio-cultural theory differs from social learning where Vygotsky asserts that

*... the central tendency of the child's development is not a gradual socialisation introduced from outside, but a gradual individualisation that emerges on the foundation of the child's internal socialisation* (Rieber & Carton, 1987b:259).

Another important premise of socio-cultural theory is the construct of the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development (zpd) is postulated by Vygotsky (1978) as

*...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers* (p. 86).

This construct is quite close in essence to one prominent definition of mentoring where Kram (cited in Brad, 2002) states that mentoring is a

*...powerful emotional interaction between an older and a younger person, in a relationship in which the older mentor is trusted, loving, and experienced in the guidance of the younger and where the mentor supports, guides, and counsels a young adult as he or she accomplishes mastery of the adult world or the world of work* (p. 88).

According to Tudge and Rogoff (1989) the construct of the zpd suggests that there is not only a difference of developmental levels between learner and learned but also that there is an understanding by the more advanced party of the needs of the less knowledgeable person.

*Vygotsky's theory thus requires that the relation between the two partners be one of intersubjectivity in which some measure of joint understanding of the task is obtained (Tudge & Rogoff, 1989:24-25).*

There is a kind of reciprocity or equality in the partnership between the learned and the learner, but for growth to occur in the latter, the former must be more advanced or more knowledgeable (Benjamin, 1995; Serpell, 1993; Stolorow, Atwood & Brandchaft, 1994; Stremmel & Fu, 1993). Intersubjectivity will be further explored in more detail in section 2.2.5 as a central explanatory construct of what occurs between mentor and mentee.

The third key premise of socio-cultural theory is that higher psychological or cognitive functions are culturally mediated through the use of language or other signs and symbols of culture. A foundational feature of social learning theory is the assumption that individuals are self-motivated to learn. However, no further elaboration is given as to the origin of this motivation. In socio-cultural theory motivation, per se, is not taken into account and without mediation by more knowledgeable others outside the child, there is less opportunity that higher psychological functions will develop.

Evans and Ave (2000) suggest that a general presumption exists in the mentoring field that one mentor role might be that of a parent. In Vygotskian terms, the tools or signs that can be mediated by the mentors include routines, activities, structure and emotional availability. If some young people lacked these signs in early life then they might receive them in later life through mentors or significant others and thereby possibly enact a process of internal socialisation.

The conceptual construct of inter-subjectivity is identified in the literature as a key feature of how learning occurs between individuals. Within this study the construct of inter-subjectivity is defined as ...*a system of reciprocal mutual influence*

(Stolorow, Atwood & Brandchaft, 1994:37). An assumption of the present study is that the mentoring relationship is also an inter subjective relationship of mutual influence. This construct will now be further explored.

### 2.2.5 Inter-subjectivity.

The construct of inter-subjectivity can be viewed as both the fertile space conducive to learning and the tool of mediation of that learning. That is, the where and the how of learning. The literature on contextual learning indicates an embedded-ness of human interaction in a psycho-socio-cultural environment where adolescent developmental tasks and biological determinants impact on learning by adolescents (Forman et al., 1993; Schulenberg et al., 1997; Rieber & Carton, 1987a).

Inter-subjectivity can be viewed as a shared or co-construction of meaning between two individuals (Stolorow et al., 1994; Forman et al., 1993). As Serpell (1993) points out...*the shared web of meanings informs* the interpretations that each participant in a relationship put on each others actions and a general consensus of meaning is then negotiated by these partners. The zone of proximal development is viewed as a shared or collaborative psychological space where there is not only a reciprocal and negotiated transfer of meanings but where there is also a slight imbalance with one less knowledgeable and one more knowledgeable partner and where cognitive, and most likely, social, emotional and spiritual growth occurs for the less knowledgeable other.

Stremmel and Fu (1993:337) refer to inter subjectivity a *...shared construction of knowledge and understanding*. Further, Stremmel and Fu (1993:341) that such a shared construction takes place through is a *negotiation of shared meaning through conversation and interaction*. However, if the knowledge gap between the two is too great, or too small, neither mentor nor mentee will benefit. Thus the mentoring process can be viewed as a shared and negotiated process where meanings for the mentor and mentee are constructed via conversation and interaction.

Neither social learning nor socio-cultural theories provide any further explanation as to the nature of the subjectivity implied in the inter-subjective relationship between individuals. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, has as one of its central tenets the

notion of a constructed subjectivity. Benjamin (1995) elaborates on the notion of inter-subjectivity by linking it to the constructs of idealisation and identification. As the constructs of inter-subjectivity and identification in understanding how learning occurs in mentoring between mentor and mentee, in particular for adolescents, an examination of those constructs will be presented through a review of the literature on Psychoanalytic theory.

## 2.2.6 Psychoanalytic Theory

Of all the psychology sub-disciplines, it is psychoanalysis that has made the most significant contribution to the exploration of the construct of subjectivity. Bonnie Litowitz critiques what she considers a one sided view of a purely socio-culturally derived self and examines the concept of a self constructing self, which has its foundations in psychoanalysis. Bonnie Litowitz's (1993) analysis of socio-cultural theory will be utilized as a means of introducing the relevance of psychoanalytic theory to the study question. The constructs of identification, subjectivity and inter subjectivity will be discussed.

Litowitz suggests that Vygotsky's position comes close to that of a *neo-behaviorist* and is an adult centric view where too much emphasis is placed on what is being done to the child. She states that *The child's perspective...can be captured by another spatial metaphor: Winnicotts ... 'potential space'. The potential space is the area that is neither what the child nor the mother knows. It is the range of the child's grandiosity and omnipotence.* (1993:190). The potential space implies the co-constructed or shared inter subjective space. Litowitz asks

*Do adults create the potential for that illusion through pedagogical impulse or because they also have a fantasy? I think the latter: They believe that the child can be / is becoming just like them. Thus identification (ie. the process of "making similar" or "being like" [Lidem : "same"]) goes in both directions from child to adult as well as from adult to child (1993:191).*

What Litowitz is alluding to here is the co-creative, co-fantasizing space which might be referred to as inter-subjectivity. Again the present research will examine the

usefulness of the construct of inter subjectivity as defined above in examining the interaction between mentor and mentee. Litowitz also introduces the idea of identification as a component of inter subjectivity. This construct will be further examined below.

## Identification

According to MacCallum and Beltman (1999) *Research has shown that young people identify more closely with models like themselves in a number of ways* (p. 30). This perspective, like that of social learning, views role modeling as a type of identification mechanism of influence by peers or other adults on adolescents (Evans & Ave, 2000). Psychoanalysis suggests another process of identification that is different from the process of modeling. Freud's concept of identification is described as *the process through which a child makes someone or an aspect of someone a part of himself. Children become a great deal like their parents, and this identificatory process greatly facilitates learning to live in the world and culture to which they are born* (Mitchell & Black, 1995:39).

Bandura (1986:48) claims that there is little agreement or unified conceptualization of the construct of identification and lists a range of differing views of this concept. These include the individual adopting either a varied range of behaviors, a *symbolic representation of the model*, taking on meanings similar to one's own, or adopting *motives, values, ideals or conscience* (Bandura, 1986). Whatever the case, Parsons proposed that the process requires a *generalized cathartic attachment* (cited in Bandura, 1986). Bandura states that the lack of concordance by theorists on this construct, coupled with minimal empirical support for it, makes it an arbitrary notion that confounds what actually happens in the course of modeling. Despite this position it is argued that *Powerful modeling influences can simultaneously change observers' behavior, thought patterns emotional reactions and evaluations* (Bandura, 1986:48). It may be that the conflict between social learning theory and psychoanalysis lies in the different ways these theories view how the cathexis of identification takes place. Psychoanalytic theory at least attempts an explanation of how identification occurs. In exploring the interaction between mentor and mentee this research will examine if and how role modeling and identification happen in the process of mentoring.

Eric Erikson (cited in Waterman, 1982) suggests that the task facing adolescents, which he called the *identity crisis*, comes about as a result of the young person having to reconfigure previous identifications into an identity with which he can move forward into adulthood. However

*... identity includes, but is more than, the sum of all the successive identifications of those earlier years when the child wanted to be, and often was forced to become, like the people he depended on. Identity is a unique product, which now meets a crisis to be solved only in new identifications with age mates and with leader figures outside the family (p.341).*

In this view, identification, rather than role modeling per se, is perceived as the primary mechanism of development of identity in the adolescent. The question of whether role modeling or identification can be considered mechanisms conducive to learning in the mentoring space needs further examination.

### **Subjectivity**

Bonnie Litowitz (1993) asserts that

*...only by reinstating subjectivity and its desires into our studies can we fully understand learning as an interactive process in the zone of proximal development. We can then come to see how gradual, complex, and conflictual is the task of socially constructing an individual (p. 194).*

Learning, viewed in this way, is seen as a process involving an evolving subjectivity, and by implication, a subject. Learning is also viewed as interactivity between one subject and another subject, a psychological space referred to in the literature as inter-subjectivity (Stolorow et al., 1994; Stremmel & Fu, 1992).

The psychoanalytic construct of subjectivity is closely allied to that of identification. Identification is, in the first instance, linked to the problem of separation of child from mother or the child facing emotional or physical loss of either parent.

(Benjamin, 1995). There arises, in the infant, identification, an embryonic form of subjectivity through the recognition of shared experience and thence a sense of self and other in inter-subjectivity. Benjamin (1995) emphasizes, for the child, there is a *complimentarity of the intra-psychic and the inter-subjective modality* (p. 42). Furthermore

*In recognizing that leaving the mother independence is a positive (as well as negative) outcome for child and mother...the child gains not only her independence (as traditionally emphasized) but also the pleasure of shared understanding* (Benjamin, 1995:42).

### **Inter-subjectivity**

The preceding discussion presented the argument that there is a kind of tension between two differing processes, independence, (subjectivity), and shared space with the other, (inter-subjectivity). Benjamin (1995) tries to solve that tension by asserting:

*that the mind works through both the relation to the other as an object of identification/projection and the relation to the other as an independent outside subject. In one of the most radical reformulations of psychoanalytic thought in this century, Winnicott (1969b) makes clear that each self may experience the other both as a part of self and as an equivalent but different center of experience* (p. 6).

The subjectivity of the individual is somehow structured in the tension between me and you, the tension of the us that is situated in, or possibly comes to constitute, the plane of inter-subjectivity. Perhaps then, the dimensions of inter-subjectivity are me, you, we and the paradox of both you and me in tension, the tension which can be conceptualized by Voegelin's *metaxy*, or in-between, of consciousness (Hughes, 1999).

Evans and Ave (2000) point out that there is a general acceptance in psychology of the notion that we all require social support, from material benefits to the sharing of



feelings, for our emotional wellbeing. Benjamin (1995) describes inter-subjectivity as a psychological category that refers to the ability of the mind to register interactions such as the actions and responses between individuals. The subject, for Benjamin, is extrinsically located within the interactive space and derives its subjectivity from that space. The conceptual construct of inter subjectivity is considered as significant to what occurs between mentor and mentee.

This Section reviewed the definition of mentoring and how each of the theoretical domains of social learning, socio-cultural and psychoanalytic theory and the constructs of role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity add to the discussion of how learning may occur in the mentoring process.

Socio-cultural theory implies that the mind is in society and learning is scaffolded by significant, more learned others. Social learning theories suggest that individual determinants in the learning process as well as social determinants. Psychoanalytic theory further elaborates on how individuals act as active agents in learning. The construct of inter subjectivity suggests that there is a shared space where learning between mentor and mentee could effectively occur.

Based on the above examined domains and within the bounds of this study an operational or working definition of learning will be adopted where learning is seen as *experiential change in the inter-subjective subjectivity of an individual*.

The above theoretical domains and constructs on their own may appear to be at odds with one another. However, brought together, they form a starting point for a conceptual framework that suggests how learning occurs between mentor and mentee in the mentoring process. The current study is unique in that it attempts to examine if and how the constructs of role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity affect the interactions between mentor and mentee.

Throughout this Section the underlying notion of the context of learning was alluded to. The following section reviews the literature on the relevance of the socio-cultural context in the mentoring process.

## 2.3 SECTION THREE: ECOLOGY, CONTEXT AND THE MENTORING PROCESS.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasises the importance of the impact of environment on human interaction and points to the embeddedness of human behaviour in a psychological and physical environment. Socio-cultural theory (as discussed in 2.2.4) described how learning occurs in any ecology as

*any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or in two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological category and then within the child as an intra-psychological category (Vygotsky, 1978:163).*

The literature on mentoring suggests that mentoring is a contextual activity and that the process of mentoring itself, no matter what form or style it assumes, is not an isolated activity (Barton-Arwood et al., 2000; Evans & Aye, 2000; Guetzloe, 1997; MacCallum & Belman, 1999). Evans & Aye (2000) assert that *Mentoring is not a discrete intervention, but occurs in a context which in turn will influence or moderate its impact* (p. 49).

The context in which this study's mentor program took place was the school setting. It is important that school cultures are supportive of mentoring programs if the program is to be effective (Guetzloe, 1997; MacCallum and Belman, 1999; Wassef, Mason, Collins, VanHalen & Ingham, 1998). Examples of relationship issues with schools such as lack of interest, little support, feedback or contact with others involved were cited in MacCallum and Belman, (1999). It was suggested that mentors are more confident when they can easily access school staff as this would provide opportunities for expressing concerns, asking questions or providing feedback to staff.

Arguments are put forward for more socially responsive contexts of mentoring (Pascarelli, 1998). Glynn (cited in Topping, 1988), suggests that it is within the wider social contexts that skills passed on and knowledge about how to learn is imparted to the protégé. Philip and Hendry (1996) note a definite gap in the research that focuses

upon how young people understand their social worlds and networks. Little attention is given to the social world within which young people make the transition towards adulthood and the impacts of social and economic policies on young people's lives are neither understood nor investigated (Goodlad, 1998).

Thus the ecological environment is seen to be crucial at several levels and has impacts on how learning happens. This is testified to in the example of the mentor program developed by the researcher where a very specific and targeted program was funded at the macro level through the Gordon Reid Foundation. That sponsorship was mediated by a local level service provider at what Bronfenbrenner would term the meso level. Finally, at the micro level, the program depended on the actual mentor's capabilities and their interactions with the young people and schools acceptance of the program.

Serpell (1993) indicates that the interdependence of the individual and socio-cultural systems raises a number of complementary paradoxes where the developing individual seeks internal self-control but requires culturally mediated tools to become independent. Furthermore, that individual will always find him or herself to be located within an inter-subjective space of shared meanings where he or she is caught in a tension between independence and reliance on the social group.

Goodnow (1993) states that in:

*The area of cognitive development, we have seen two strong lines of research: one emphasising the individual as actively constructing schemes and meanings, the other emphasising social or guided constructions. These two lines of research need not become opposed orthodoxies. On the contrary they need to strengthen each other (p. 378).*

Furthermore, Goodnow (1993) identifies an approach in the field of learning theory that *emphasises development as taking the form not simply of some acquisition by one individual (e.g. self-regulation, or an understanding of conservation) but as the acquisition of shared meanings (p. 378).* The space between the mentor and mentee

can be seen as within precisely this zone of shared meanings, a dyadic interaction set in an ecological context operating at a number of levels from macro to micro.

Mentoring is described as a complex process taking place in many structured or formal and informal settings. It has been conceptualised in a broad range of models and is seen as beneficial in the world of adolescents, the business world and in professional arena including medical, psychological and pedagogic professions. There are several explanatory models for learning or growth in the interaction space between individuals and in order to study complex human interactions in that space some authors propose that Hermeneutics is an appropriate method of inquiry. That method if inquiry will be discussed in Chapter Three. The rationale is that this method can conceptually stretch over disparate and incommensurate paradigms and hold them together.

## **2.4 SECTION FOUR: HERMENEUTIC THINKING AS A CONCEPTUAL GUIDELINE.**

This literature review focuses on numerous issues around what was considered as important and relevant to how the mentoring process occurs. These issues include:

- i) Mentoring as a complex process that can be influenced by a number of variables such as gender, culture and developmental issues
- ii) Explanatory models for how learning may occur in the mentoring process.
- iii) The importance of context when examining how mentoring may occur between mentor and mentee

Thus an exploration of several contemporary, relevant learning theories and constructs was undertaken (Section Two). Those theories are congruent in some aspects and disparate in others.

Evans and Ave (2000) state that *Mentoring has typically been advocated with little consideration of the psychological mechanisms underlying it as a means of social influence hence this study. Furthermore, it is also imperative to have a theory of the supposed mechanisms in order to conduct meaningful process and outcome evaluations* (p, 42). As identified in the literature review those supposed mechanisms

are varied, complex and often conceptually incommensurate as in the example of the constructs of identification and role modelling.

Following the indications of Kuhn (2000b), Nakkula & Ravitch (1998) and Packer (1993) hermeneutic thinking will be considered as one conceptual means of resolving the incommensurability between explanatory constructs of mentoring identified in the literature.

The father of such concepts as paradigm shifts, Thomas Kuhn, elaborates on the problems of incommensurability and asserts that two separate sciences, as with languages, can be learnt but that translations from one to the other can lead to conceptual problems (Kuhn, 2000a). For example, he suggests that the great divide between natural and human sciences might always exist but goes on to qualify this argument by stating that it may not be so much the line between the two sciences that is the problem but *rather about the way in which that line may be drawn* (Kuhn, 2000b:221). As Goodnow (1993) has suggested, two disparate views need not necessarily become opposed orthodoxies and Kuhn suggests a way through the problem via the pathway of hermeneutics.

It is beyond the scope of this study to further elaborate on the problem of incommensurability between various disciplines. However, research suggests that hermeneutics is an appropriate method of inquiry into human interactivity such as mentoring (Nakkula & Ravitch, 1998; Serpell, 1993; Tappan, 1997). This method of inquiry or way of thinking will be viewed as an important conceptual guide for analysis of this study's findings.

The purpose of this literature review has been to

- i) Examine the literature on the definition and process of mentoring and issues relevant to young people in the mentoring process.
- ii) Identify and discuss the literature on how learning may occur between mentor and mentee in the mentoring process.
- iii) Present a method of inquiry that will guide this study in answering the research question.

An examination of the process of mentoring has shown it to be a complex, dynamic activity set in a broad variety of settings and taking form in numerous styles. It is an

activity that is impacted upon by its socio-cultural ecology. Other issues that were reviewed include gender, culture and adolescent development issues. Limitations to the size of this study meant that a broad coverage of salient issues were undertaken, but not to any great depth.

Several explanatory theories were identified in the literature on mentoring. Constructs that have been utilised in explaining how mentoring happens were identified and examined. While there was some congruency between those theories and constructs there was also much incommensurability and a need is identified for a conceptual approach that can hold the tension of the incommensurability.

Because of the disparity between several explanatory models and constructs on how mentoring happens a need has been identified for a method of inquiry that can help to overcome that disparity. A conceptual guideline, hermeneutic thinking, has been posited by this research and has been supported in the literature.

Chapter Three provides a summary of the methodological paradigm chosen for this study. That paradigm was identified in the literature as appropriate for the study of complex human interaction such as mentoring. A summary of this study's method and procedures will also be provided in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY.**

Mentoring, as has been discussed in the literature reviewed above, is a complex, dynamic and diverse activity. A study of this type of activity requires a method of inquiry that is flexible and all encompassing in order to address such diversity. Hermeneutics has been indicated as either/or a methodology, paradigm or philosophical approach and has been put forward as an appropriate method for exploring the mentoring process *vis a vis* the specific research question/s this thesis focuses upon.

This Chapter has been divided into two sections.

Section One will discuss the appropriateness of Hermeneutics as a research method for this study.

Section Two provides an overview of the study design, procedures and method of analysis of the findings of the study.

### **3.1 SECTION ONE: RESEARCH PARADIGM.**

Hermeneutics has been described invariably as a science, art or theory of interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Robinson, 1995; Thompson, 1981; Van Manen, 1990). It has also been described as the *...deliberate and systematic methodology of interpretation* (Tappan, 1997:646). Hermeneutics has been conceptualised as an art form or philosophy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and as a science (Van Manen, 1990). For the purposes of this study it is seen as both.

This method of inquiry had its beginnings as an interpretive tool for understanding biblical and other texts. Issues such as grammatical, psychological and contextual understanding became important considerations for researchers who wanted a deeper understanding of what they were reading (Tappan, 1997; Van Manen, 1990). For

Nakkula and Ravitch, hermeneutics is *about clarifying the meaning of messages – hidden messages, messages with multiple meanings, messages that carry essential importance for the way we live* (1998:xix).

Gadamer (cited in Garrat & Hodkinson, 1998) asserted that *all knowledge is interpretation. Humans make sense of the world by interpreting data from their own standpoint. We cannot do anything else* (p. 520). Philosophers Wittgenstein and Heidegger viewed all human experience as interpretive and that these interpretive judgements are mediated through culture and language. Thus, some have seen hermeneutics as a generic, all encompassing mode for all human understanding of the world or human experience (Eliade, 1987).

Along the continuum of views on hermeneutics, which range from a general, overarching theory of understanding to no right or wrong way to interpret anything, there exists a range of specific hermeneutic methodologies. Nakkula and Ravitch (1998) see hermeneutics as a guiding framework for conceptualising and practically implementing the act of interpretation by integrating theory, practice and method. Thompson (1981) and Robinson (1995) view Ricoeur's hermeneutics as a philosophical activity and as a way of knowing. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) refer to a *critical hermeneutics* where, for qualitative research, there can only be interpretation; no matter how stridently many researchers may argue that the evidence speaks for itself. Thompson (1981) and Van Manen (1990) view their hermeneutic method as strongly related to the phenomenological approach.

Hence, a number of varying hermeneutic approaches exist. Another view of hermeneutics, which fits more closely with the assumptions of the present researcher, is constructivist hermeneutics. Constructivist hermeneutics suggests that not only do we interpret what we see but we also construct knowledge and new understandings (Gliner, Morgan & Harmon, 1991; Guba, 1990; Hom, 1998; Rodwell & Byers, 1997; Tappan, 1997). When narrative in the form of interviews, as with this study, is a primary basis of data interpretation of participant's stories, it is seen as a process of construction and reconstruction. Guba (1990) suggests we become co-participants in the inquiry process where the researcher is not considered as simply a naïve receiver of description. Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick (1998) describe such a process as processual being.



In this sense research is socially constructed between researcher and participant and, as Guba states, *...the method must be hermeneutic and dialectic, focusing on the social processes of construction, reconstruction, and elaboration and must be concerned with conflict as well as consensus* (1990:79). For Horn (1998) there is a co-emergence of perspectives. Gadamer (cited in Garrat & Hodkinson, 1998) refers to that co-emergence as a *fusion of horizons* (p. 607).

An important assumption of the constructivist paradigm, according to Guba (1990), is that knowledge, in this case research knowledge, *is a human construction, never certifiable as ultimately true but problematic and ever changing* (p. 26). Thus, as Guba views it, the hermeneutic constructivist assumes that many constructions are possible. Tappan (1997) supports this position and states that text/action has many meanings and that those meanings are assigned by the interpretive community.

Another assumption of constructivist hermeneutics is that science is never value free and that interpretive statements are generally rooted in the researcher's own ethical, political and cultural bias (Garrat & Hodkinson, 1998; Gliner et al., 1999; Tappan, 1997). The more that the researcher can declare their ethical, political and cultural biases, the clearer research statements can be. Declaration of assumptions and biases will facilitate future researchers in guiding their work (Gliner et al., 1999).

The following is a summary of the constructivist hermeneutic method of inquiry as it will be utilised in this study-.

- i.) There are hidden and multiple meanings in the text of human activity.
- ii.) Research is a form of understanding and all understanding is an act of interpretation
- iii.) There are numerous ways of interpreting our understanding; one of these ways is the constructivist approach.
- iv.) Reality is socially constructed and, in research, meanings are co-constructed between researcher and participant.
- v.) No research is value free or neutral.

### **3.1.1 Hermeneutics and mentoring.**

The mentoring experience is complex, dynamic and varied as evidenced in the literature. The literature review suggests that to date evaluative, comparative and experimental designs have been utilised to answer the question of whether mentoring works and what is it good for.

The present study is not about outcomes or evaluations but expressly concerns itself with the relationship between the mentor and mentee and what occurs during the process of mentoring. Indications for the direction of the present study are derived from numerous studies suggesting that little attention has been given to the nature or quality of the mentoring relationship (Bein, 1999; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Royse, 1998). Evans and Ave (2000) state that there has been no research on the psychological mechanisms that explains how mentoring acts as a means of social influence. Therefore, promoting mentoring as a social strategy is problematical.

Much of the literature on mentoring does not view mentoring simply as an interaction between two or more individuals in isolation. The mentoring relationship is viewed as contextual as discussed in Chapter Two, Section Three. That context is described as the ecological, socio-cultural or social learning space (Dansky, 1996; Hausfather, 1996; Malm, 1999; Trickett, 1997). Research has taken this factor into account yet little exists as to the nature of the effect of the context on the process of mentoring.

The rationale for utilising hermeneutics as a methodology for researching the relationship between mentor and mentee can be outlined along the following lines –

- (i) Mentoring is viewed as complex.
- (ii) Mentoring is not static but dynamic, and elements of that interaction are constantly emerging and range from the hidden to the more immediately observable.
- (iii) Findings about human interactivity can never be final, can only be truth *like* and are constantly changing as new findings emerge.

Support for the use of the hermeneutical method for studies such as this is provided by Nakkula and Ravitch (1998) who state that human interaction is not static but dynamic, emerging and evolving. A methodological approach that can analyse both the immediately observable data while also examining the not so observable emerging data is appropriate to the study of human interactivity. For example, care for another human being may be a psychological construct that helps to explain what

occurs during mentoring, but what is care? It is not tangible or very observable and has hidden meanings and those meanings would have to be clarified and articulated.

- The hidden aspect of human interaction can also be located within what Nakkula and Ravitch call the social sphere. Nakkula and Ravitch (1998) argued that *human beings – our thoughts, communications, interactions and interpretations – cannot be abstracted from the constraints and possibilities of the larger societal forces* (p. xvii). The literature on mentoring has indicated that the socio-ecological context exerts a powerful influence on the inter-subjective interactions between the mentor and mentee (as discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.3).

Research findings are never final and can only be truth like (Dokecki, 1992). Froyland (1991) states that the findings of the hermeneutics researcher are temporary:

*They are temporary since because of their subjective focus they are changing, but they are also temporary because they are incomplete. The researcher never has a final answer, only an answer for the present* (p. 65).

It is a strongly held assumption in this study that all research is limited in veracity. That is, research can be truth like but never reveal the complete truth per se. The attempt at understanding is an ongoing process. Nakkula and Ravitch (1998) put it this way,

*Hermeneutics as a theory of living, as a means of understanding the essence of the human being might be considered a natural theory of life, one grounded in and derived from two of the most central functions of human development: the ongoing interpretation and articulation of everyday experience* (p. 4).

According to Popper (cited in Honderich, 1995), *...all past theories have turned out to be false and only wild immodesty could let us suppose that currently accepted theories will escape such an ultimate fate* (p.898). The statements we can make

around our research are always limited by future adjustments in perspectives of human reality.

Therefore, it could be suggested, as the literature around mentoring postulates, that the mentoring process is complex and dynamic. The hermeneutic method of inquiry can be considered an appropriate paradigm to implement for the present study to be considered credible.

### **3.2 SECTION TWO: HERMENEUTICS AND THIS STUDY.**

The background to this study was outlined in Chapter One. This study was designed to gain an understanding of how the process of mentoring occurred for mentors and mentees. Interviews and focus groups were used to explore and describe that process and these descriptions were collated and categorised into themes to methodically provide an understanding of overall experiences of mentors and mentees. Moustakas (1990) states that through the process of inquiry we reach deeper into

*the regions of a human problem or experience and come to know and understand its underlying dynamics and constituents more and more fully. The initial 'data' is within me; the challenge is to discover and explicate its nature. I am not only lifting out the essential meanings of an experience but I am actively awakening and transforming my own self* (p. 13).

As with the life affirming experiences of the mentors and mentees themselves, the researcher found himself, in Moustakas' words, awakening and transforming throughout the process of the study itself.

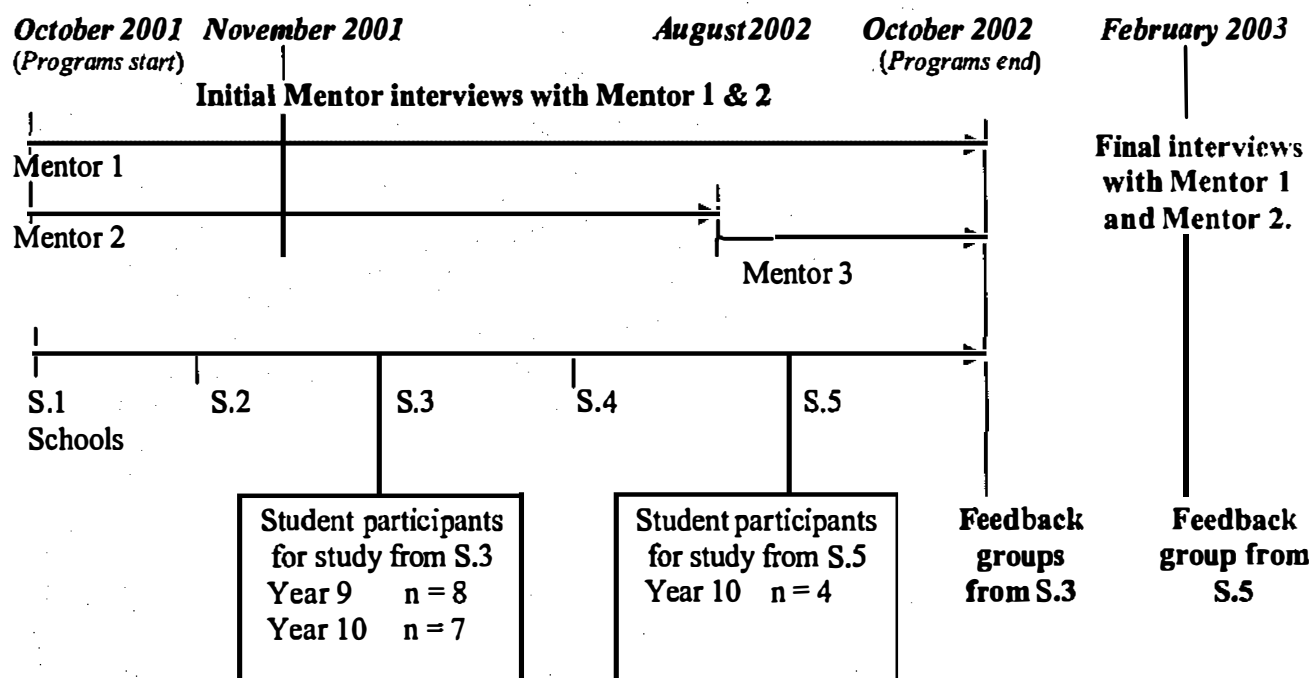
The scope of the study was determined by sample sizes, interview lengths and the quality of the feedback provided by the mentors and mentees. Nakulla and Ravitch (1998) suggest that because data collection and the interpretation process are potentially endless there has to be an arbitrary endpoint to the collection of the data.

### 3.2.1 Study design.

The study took place over a period of twelve months from October 2001 to October 2002. Mentor 1, a female Aboriginal Youth Worker and Mentor 2, a male Caucasian Youth Worker were interviewed at the beginning and end of that period. Mentor 2 left the program after ten months. He was replaced by another Youth Worker known as Mentor 3. Mentor 1 ran the program for the full twelve months and worked with Mentor 2 in the initial ten months and later with Mentor 3 in the final two months. Only Mentor 1 and 2 were interviewed. Refer to Figure 1 for a depiction of the study design.

Feedback was also collected from nineteen out of seventy six mentees who took part in the mentoring programs at five schools over that twelve month period. This feedback was collected at the end of the twelve month period.

**Figure 1. Depiction of study design.**



In keeping with the method of inquiry chosen for this study, both mentors and mentees were interviewed. Two mentors and nineteen mentees participated in this study between October 2001 and February 2003.

According to Patton (1990)

*The validity, meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than the sample size (p. 185).*

The sample size was large enough to reflect the assumption that in-depth data from the participants would provide valuable information regarding what was happening between mentor and mentee in the mentoring process in a particular context. Another consideration in determining sample size was time and resource limitations. The data gathered from the initial and final interviews of the mentors and the feedback from the mentees was considerable and analysis of data using the hermeneutic method was extensive.

### **3.2.2 Sample.**

#### ***Mentors.***

A purposeful or criterion sampling strategy (Creswell, 1998) was used where the individuals who participated in this study were considered as representative of people who had experienced the phenomena of mentoring. The participants were a convenience sample as opposed to a random sample (Beier et al., 2000). That is, the mentors chosen for this study were employed at the agency where the researcher developed the mentor project in which they worked. The researcher assisted in hiring them, supervising them and supporting them for the duration of the twelve month project. On the other hand, there was a random element to the choice of this sample

in that the researcher had no control over who applied for the positions. Two other professionals were involved with final selection of the employees and it seems fortuitous that these workers represented quite different cultural and gender cohorts. Refer to the discussion in Section 2.2.3 on what Bandura (1986) called *fortuitous encounters*.

As indicated in Figure 1, three mentors worked on the project however only Mentor 1 and Mentor 2 were interviewed because of the length of their involvement in the program and they were invited into the study initially. In hindsight including Mentor 3 would have added more quality to the study insofar as he was an Aboriginal mentor. This sample might be considered small, however, these two workers are representative of two significantly divergent cultural groups where one participant was an Aboriginal female (Mentor 1) the other was a Caucasian male (Mentor 2). This made for a rich and varied narrative. Limitations of such a sample size are examined in Chapter Six.

### ***Mentees.***

The mentees were a sample made up of three feedback groups from two schools (S.3 & S.5). The feedback groups were mixed gender. The sample of mentees could be considered as random in that out of the five schools where the mentor program was delivered, only two schools responded despite several phone calls to all the participating schools. Students who participated in mentor groups were given the choice of whether they wished to take part in the feedback groups.

The three feedback groups from the two consenting schools consisted of nineteen out of seventy six students that were mentored. One group was made up of seven Year Ten participants; the second group was made up of eight Year Nine participants. Both these groups came from one school, S.3, and were mentored by Mentors 1 and 2. The third group consisted of four Year Ten participants from the second school, S.5. They were in Year 11 at the time of the interviews. The students from the third group were mentored by Mentor 1 and a new Youth Worker (Mentor 3) employed after Mentor 2

left the project. The ages in all feedback groups ranged from around thirteen years to fifteen years and participants consisted of an even distribution of males and females.

### **3.2.3 Settings.**

The mentor programs were carried out in four metropolitan and one regional government schools. Mentor 1 and 2 facilitated groups together or individually, depending upon need. However, mentor 2 left before the completion of the project due to personal reasons and another Youth Worker (mentor 3) was employed to help mentor 1 complete the project at the fifth school.

Mentors 1 and 2 were interviewed in private rooms either at their home or workplace. All feedback groups were carried out at their respective schools in private rooms provided by the school.

### **3.2.4 Procedures.**

1. A twelve month mentor program was conceived, designed and implemented by the researcher at a human services agency where the researcher worked. The purpose of the program was to provide life skills programs for students considered at risk of school failure. Several schools found out about the program largely by word of mouth. Staff from those schools asked for the programs to be delivered at their schools. The researcher was very interested in interpersonal dynamics and, through the process of setting up this project, considered this to be a good opportunity to study what occurs in the mentoring process. The researcher spoke to the thesis supervisor about this possibility and the research journey started. Approval was granted by the Higher Degrees Committee and Ethics Committee of Edith Cowan University to commence the study.
2. The researcher informed the mentors of the research proposal, including the purpose of the study, study design and benefits for others who work with youth. The mentors' consent for interviews was sought (refer to Appendix One). By the time consent was obtained and Edith Cowan University



requirements were met for beginning the study, both mentor 1 and 2 had already carried out one and half pilot programs. They had not received any training as mentors at that stage although they understood that their role in these programs was to be mentors. Thus both mentor 1 and 2 had already had mentor type experiences and had begun to formulate thoughts about mentoring by the time of the initial interviews. Those thoughts and experiences were enriched and further elaborated after carrying out several more programs throughout the remainder of the project period.

3. The researcher carried out initial interviews with each mentor seeking their current understanding of the mentoring process based on their thoughts and experiences of mentoring up to this point. One mentor had had contact with other youth mentors in a former job and the other mentor had set up what he considered more of a role modelling type program at one school in a previous job. One mentor left the program after eight months for personal reasons. However, both mentors had a final interview at about the same time after the end of the twelve month project. The interviews were taped on mini tapes and those tapes were then transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber. The four interviews, two initial and two final, were a minimum of an hour long each.
4. Five non-government schools in the metropolitan and regional areas were involved in the project. Contact staff at these schools were principals, school health workers or key teaching staff. They were made aware that student participant feedback would be sought at the end of the project through instruments such as focus groups. As all of the student participants in this study were under eighteen years of age, consent letters were given out by their teachers to take home to their parents explaining the mentoring program and the study and requesting permission for their child to participate in the program and the study (refer to Appendix Two). All parents gave consent for their children to participate. At the time of the focus feedback groups the adolescent participants were informed of the purpose of the study and that their responses would contribute to the study. They were informed that their names and the names of the schools would not be identified. No student objected to

these conditions although some asked questions for further clarity for themselves.

5. All five participating schools were contacted at the end of the twelve month project period. However, only two expressed interest in supporting a student participant feedback process. Students from the mentor programs were asked by staff if they wanted to participate in feedback groups. Out of the twenty five students who participated in the programs at these two schools nineteen participated in feedback groups.

On the assumption that the process of what occurs in the mentoring process is complex, several modes of eliciting descriptions of the experience were used with the research participants. This process included providing photographs from a standard Photo-Language package (Refer to Appendix Five) from which students chose a photo that most closely described their experience of mentoring. Each participant was asked to select a photo that best represented the mentoring experience for them. Once they had selected a photo the students were gathered around a table and then asked to speak about how the photo related to their experience. Not all students did select a photo, Never-the-less, the opportunity for comments was provided to all students. For example, less vocal students were specifically asked for their thoughts. All participants were provided with written feedback sheets and asked to write their thoughts down in answer to questions on those sheets (Refer to Appendix Six).

To assist in collecting student responses from the two larger feedback groups the researcher took a TAFE placement student as an assistant to record phrases as each student commented on their experiences. For the smaller group the researcher recorded comments and phrases on a whiteboard and then took these comments down in a notebook. Written feedback was also collected from students. The feedback groups lasted from an hour to an hour and half.

The ages of the participants ranged from thirteen to fifteen years of age.

### **3.2.5 Validity of study and Ethics.**

## Validity

An assumption of constructivist hermeneutics is that, ultimately, the validity of interpretive studies may never be gained, as it is always possible to argue against an interpretation (Phillips, 1987; Thomas, 1981). Furthermore, some researchers contest conventional understandings of rigour, reliability and validity. (Garraat & Hodkinson, 1998; Nakulla & Ravitch, 1998; Rodwell & Byers, 1997; Tappan, 1997). Garraat and Hodkinson for example assertively distance themselves from the use of the term validity altogether and cite another term - transgressive validity, where *the key test is the extent to which research interrupts existing ways of knowing, rather than whether it corresponds to an external reality* (1998:517). Van Manen (1990) states that

*...in the work of various contemporary human science researchers, writing is conceived largely as a reporting process. With them the aim is to make human science methodologically 'rigorous', systems based' and 'hard'. In such frame work there is no place for thinking about research itself as a poetic textural (writing) practice. But there may be a price to be paid for the desire to be respectable in the traditional 'scientific' sense. And that has to do with the quality of the insights generated by a pre-occupation with epistemology and method (p. 125).*

At best, this way of looking at validity and reliability is that it allows for a more fluid or artful approach to research. At worst, the research might be considered relativistic, seriously flawed or not considered to be research at all (Garraat & Hodkinson, 1998). This depends on who reads the research and how they view such an approach.

Establishing credibility in hermeneutic studies is, never-the-less, considered possible and important and several studies cite at least two ways of doing this. The first is establishing the transparency of the interpreter's biases and assumptions and the second way is that interpretations are tested against agreement of an interpretive community rather than against fixed norms or standards. (Garret & Hodkinson, 1998; Tappan, 1997; Phillips, 1987).

The first method of establishing credibility rests on the assumption of the constructivist hermeneutics method of inquiry where the researcher cannot help but bring her or his own experiences, values and intuitions into the relationship with the study participants and that they can never fully bracket those biases (Garrett & Hodgkinson, 1998; Horn, 1998). It is therefore incumbent on researchers to identify, reveal and evaluate their biases and blind spots as their interpretations interact with the narrative of the participant (Tappan, 1997).

The researcher's biases and values are grounded in a background as a trained analytic counsellor, work and experience as a counsellor, and tertiary education in the form of undergraduate studies and degree in Bachelor Social Science (Children Studies). The researcher has an interest and wide reading in psychoanalysis and therefore has a keen interest in the constructs of intersubjectivity, identification and subjectivity. A background in Children Studies has meant a greater reading and interest in the learning theories. Thus, an example of what Tappan (1997) calls a *dynamic tension* in the interpretive process is that while these constructs and learning theories are identified in the literature the researcher has included them in this study because of an interest in them. Another researcher without such a background might not have placed as much emphasis on these constructs and therefore not have included them in a literature search. The researcher has also stated and outlines the reasons for and the assumptions around his chosen method of inquiry (Refer to discussions in Sections 3.0, 3.1, 3.2).

The second method of determining credibility rests on the assumption that the audience of any study must come to an interpretive agreement. The researcher sought feedback from the mentors as to the credibility of the interpretations of their narrative. The researcher sought credibility of the interpretations of the mentees narratives through the triangulation of their texts. That is, gathering the verbal, pictorial and written feedback of a random sample of around twenty five per cent of all mentees who used the programs.

Nakulla and Ravitch (1998) put forward a three tiered approach to testing the credibility of hermeneutic research including the elements of i) coherence, ii)

external evidence and, iii) consensus. Each of these elements will be discussed to explain how this study tested for credibility of interpretation of the data.

- i) **Coherence.** Rather than asserting something as having happened, for example through the use of traditional measures such as indexes of reliability, there should be a subtle articulation of what has happened in particular moments or through subtle specificity of findings. In this study, this occurs through providing examples of verbatim narrative and interpretations linked to those examples. Examples are given of several categories in the form of participant narrative that are then clustered in themes in a way that is transparent and traceable.
- ii) **External evidence:** Many, competing interpretations are possible. Participants are viewed as primary sources of external evidence (external to the researcher's understandings.) If there are several sources of external evidence there is a greater chance of credibility of the researcher's interpretations. In this study sources of external evidence include the mentor's verbal narratives and the youth participant's written and verbal narratives.
- iii) **Consensus:** This construct is similar to the notion of the *interpretive community* (Tappan, 1997; Phillips, 1987). Nakulla and Ravitch (1998) refer to consensus as interpretative agreement rather than to the more conventional technique of inter-rater reliability. Consensus building is around bringing different interpretations onto a meaningful dialogue where, however, modification of interpretation can be ongoing. Never-the-less, two assumptions help contain this process, one is that human action does have a limited field of possibilities (Thompson, 1981) and two, that we arbitrarily nominate an end point to interpretation with the full awareness *that any consensus is simply the most current and most feasible one* (Nakulla & Ravitch, 1998). Consensus was gained through mentor feedback as to the credibility of the researcher's interpretations. Further consensus is sought through the reading of the research by other researchers.

### **Ethical considerations.**

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Edith Cowan University. The purpose of the study was described to the mentors and their consent was given to interview them and to tape and transcribe those interviews. They were informed that neither their names nor the school's names would be used in the study. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without conditions or consequences.

The mentees who participated in the mentor programs were all under the age of eighteen years therefore, consent was sought from their parents through a form that was sent home with the students. Schools were given the option to participate in facilitating focus feedback groups and program participants at consenting schools were also given the choice as to whether they wished to participate in feedback groups. At the time of the focus group sessions these students were informed of the purpose of the feedback group sessions and their contribution to this study. All students verbally consented to continue with the group with the assurance that their name, the names of the mentors nor the school name would be used in the study.

Code numbers were assigned to verbatim quotes to protect the identity of the participants and participating schools. All consent forms, feedback sheets, notes, tapes and transcripts are held by the researcher in a secure place. These will be preserved for five years at the researcher's residence in a locked filing cabinet, after which they will be destroyed by being shredded.

#### **3.2.6 Data collection.**

Nakulla and Ravitch (1998) define data as the *action, interaction, observation, perceptions, thoughts and feelings that relate to our sundry careers and research questions* (p. 44). Change and movement in these interactions, actions and perceptions are symbolised by the narratives of the participants and hermeneutic interpretation focuses on that movement or change. Larger patterns of change emerge in categories of significant statements that are gradually found through interpretations of the narrative (Collaizi, 1978; Nakulla & Ravitch, 1998).

In keeping with the hermeneutic approach, data collection involved in-depth pre and post interviews of the mentors and feedback group sessions with the mentees. In depth interviewing is particularly useful when the researcher wants to gain access to understandings of experiences that cannot be directly observed by the researcher.

Creswell (1998) advises testing for *right region* questions for interviews. That is questions that were appropriate to the studies aims. Those right region questions were tested for validity in several pilot interviews carried out during the completion of the coursework for this Master of Social Science degree. Questions to those professionals included i) what do you see your role as, ii) what is it you think works with adolescents, and iii) what role do you see mentoring playing in the area of working with young people. Right region questions were also tested for validity through the examination of the literature in Chapter Two. The mentor interviews consisted of open ended questions with some closed questions for further clarity. Right region questions were used to guide the interview with further questions evolving as issues relevant to the research arose (Refer to Appendix Three).

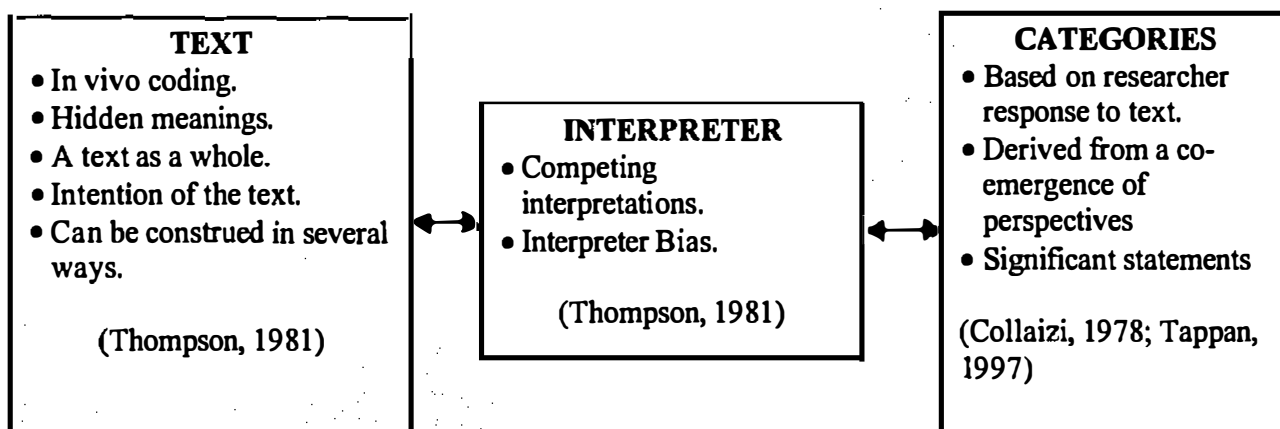
The interview format consisted of asking Mentors 1 and 2 structured questions from an interview schedule. Those questions were used as a guide to the interviews and were supplemented by other open and close ended questions to elicit further clarification of responses by the mentors. Each interview began with the researcher asking the mentors to reflect on their experiences or understandings of the mentoring process.

The interviews took place in private rooms convenient to the mentors, were not less than an hour long each and were tape recorded on mini tapes. Those tapes were later transcribed by a professional transcriber. Transcriptions of the tapes equated to approximately one hundred pages of descriptive data relevant to the mentors experiences in working with mentees. Data gained from the group interviews and written feedback sheets from the mentees equated to twenty six pages of narrative.

### **3.2.7 Process of data analysis**

Data was collected, transcribed and sifted initially. The tapes were listened to analytically again after transcription and the transcriptions were read several times and significant statements were identified and highlighted. In vivo coding was utilised in identifying significant statements which were then formulated into categories. These categories were then clustered into themes and sub themes. The intention of the mentors' descriptions was used to get a feel for hidden meanings and because the narrative could be construed in several ways, care was taken to remain faithful to ensure the fit between the researcher's interpretations and the mentor's meanings. The researcher's interpretations were corroborated by the mentors through them reading the research findings and discussions. Figure 2 outlines the process of hermeneutic inquiry as it applies to data analysis.

**Figure 2. A diagrammatic representation of the hermeneutic method of inquiry used in this study demonstrating the relationship between data collection methodology.**



The process of data analysis as utilised in this study is outlined here.

- 1) A review of the Literature on the process of mentoring was conducted.
- 2) Descriptions of the experiences of the mentoring process were collected through face to face interviews with the mentors and from mentee feedback groups.



- 3) Reading and reviewing of transcripts and notes several times. Recording reflections, emerging categories and meanings.
- 4) Using invivo coding method to extract significant statements and highlighting narrative in data transcripts. Invivo coding refers to a process where significant statements are highlighted in the verbatim written text. An example of this is given in Appendix Four.
- 5) Highlighting significant statements and identifying their meaning. The meanings of reoccurring or dominant statements were recorded and categorised in columns next to the narrative (refer to Appendix Four).
- 6) Clustering categories and dominant statements to develop themes and sub themes (Collaizi, 1978). This process allowed the researcher to identify themes that were consistently present in mentor and mentee responses. Themes were referred back to original clusters of categories to validate them.
- 7) Relating of themes to the literature review to validate findings.
- 8) Comparative analysis of mentor and mentee themes to validate what both were saying.

### **Coding and themes**

In the case of the mentors invivo coding was used in the columns parallel to the verbatim narrative of their interviews. The coding related to significant statements made by the mentors and a number of categories were drawn from an analysis of these codes. The categories are drawn from (i) commonalities between the mentor's narratives (ii) commonalities in the narratives of the mentees, (iii) those less easily detected as being common amongst all participants and, (iv) derived from statements which were deemed significant for the researcher.

The categories were then further clustered into themes as suggested by Collaizi, (1978). The themes are identified in Chapter Four and discussed further in Chapter Five. The transcripts of the four interviews were then analysed again and new categories and themes continued to emerge until the researcher was satisfied that all essential thematic descriptions had been uncovered. Nakulla and Ravitch (1998)

suggestion that there has to be an arbitrary endpoint to the collection and interpretation of the narrative was observed in this research. No doubt other useful categories and themes could have been derived from the interviews. The themes (Chapter Four) and discussion of the themes (Chapter Five) were returned to the mentors to read for a validation of their experience and the researcher's interpretations.

In the case of the mentees, a similar analysis was undertaken where *invivo* coding was utilised using their own words verbal and written. Categories were then marked against their dialogue and themes identified. This process was repeated several times until no further new themes emerged.

Mentor and mentee themes were individually analysed and were also then comparatively analysed and discussed. Feedback was sought from the mentors as to the validity of the themes and categories. Both mentors were provided with the written texts of Chapter Four and Chapter Five and were asked to comment on those texts. Both mentors showed surprise at how they came across in the interviews but concurred that the themes and categories accurately reflected their experiences. One mentor commented that he had seen and spoken to parents of mentees and some mentees he had worked with some time after the programs finished. He gave one example that seemed to reflect the 'special' impact of the program on some of the mentees where one mentee said to him 'I remember your voice every time I think about lashing out'. This mentors life, as much as that of his protégés life, had been changed by the experience of mentoring.

#### **A note on the interpretation of data.**

Tappan (1997) suggests that there is a tension between the interpreters' bias and experiences and the experiences of the participants and states that

*reading/interpreting is fundamentally a dialectical activity in which the impulse to understand a text and the impulse to connect that text*

*to the readers/interpreters life experience stand in an ongoing dynamic tension, and it is this tension that drives the interpretive process (p. 653).*

One such form of tension in the interpreting activity is identified by researchers who assert that description alone of participant narrative is not enough and that an interpretation is called for in the process of analysing that narrative (Hom, 1998; Phillips, 1987). Phillips uses the example of a person raising her arm; she may be stretching, hailing a friend, seeking attention or wanting to ask a question. Finding the meanings of such expressions of experience can be difficult because of their complexity and therefore more systematic methods of interpretation are called for where hermeneutics is identified as one such method (Tappan, 1997).

An example of the interpretive tension in this study, was where one participant's description of the experience of mentoring, based on a photo from the Photo Language collection, highlighted the sub-themes of growth or emergence through the intersubjectivity of the mentoring process (refer to the photo in Appendix Five). The experience of that participant was listed in the sub-theme the researcher named emergence, as it seemed best to fit what the photo was depicting rather than growth per se. Emergence, to the researcher, connotated a new subjectivity. This material did arise from the data but something new had also arisen between the researcher's interpretation and the narrative. Such a process has been referred to as a *co-emergence of perspectives* as opposed to one best interpretation (Hom, 1998). Interpretation viewed in this way is, as Tappan suggests, a dialectical activity suited to the inquiry into the complexity of human interaction.

Another example of the dynamic tension in the interpretive process has to do with the assumption of hermeneutics that subtle meanings are, at times, hidden from both researcher and investigator (Phillips, 1987; Thompson, 1981). This tension was demonstrated when on some occasions words failed both mentors and mentees when they attempted to describe what actually happened or how something happened. One way through this problem was by using closed questions to clarify answers to open ended questions, however not all such processes ended in any simplified clarity. Another way through this tension, in the case of the mentees, was by providing

several mediums, such as written, pictorial and verbal cues, to help them construct meaningful answers. The process of sorting through meanings can involve debate, discussion and sometimes disagreement. This is to be expected when utilising a methodology such as the constructivist hermeneutic where meanings are not found but made (Tappan, 1997).

The next Chapter examines the findings based on the two initial and two final interviews with the mentors and feedback from nineteen mentees that elected to be in the feedback groups. Those findings are analysed and compacted into themes and sub themes of the mentors and mentees.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.0 FINDINGS**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data of the study. Each major theme for mentors and mentees is described separately and validated using direct quotes from the narratives and interviews of the participants.

This chapter is divided into three sections.

Section One identifies the themes of the mentors.

Section Two identifies the themes of the mentees.

Section Three summarises the meanings of the themes of the mentors and mentees.

### **4.1 SECTION ONE: MENTORS.**

#### **4.1.1 Themes from pre program interviews.**

Seven themes arose from the analysis of interview data. 1) The role of the mentor; 2) Professional skills; 3) Young people as agency; 4) Adolescent developmental issues; 5) Context of mentoring; 6) Gender/culture; and 7) Intuition and ineffable experiences. Numerical suffixes at the end of each quote will indicate distribution of the data. That is the female mentor will be indicated by the number (1) and the male mentor by the number (2). Quotes will be in italics. In many instances both mentors were in concurrence around issues raised. In other cases they had divergent perspectives.

#### **Theme 1: The Role of mentor.**

What the role of a mentor meant to each interviewee was derived from their own experiences, their thoughts on mentoring and their theoretical understanding of what a mentor is. Their experiences included having either worked alongside mentors,

having worked in a mentor related role and having delivered a pilot program prior to any supplementary mentor training that they had received for their roles as mentors in delivering the adolescent mentor programs;

*Certainly my thoughts about mentorship have changed. I have accessed quite a lot of good stuff on the internet, I have covered the books and I mentored a diary that was set up by somebody over east. Everybody seems to bring their own sort of bit into it. But there are some commonalities in it ...such as the mentor being the guidance role and I suppose as a progress or check that – somebody to keep in contact with them on a regular basis, but also to be able to access them at other times when queries might arise and at those times I suppose as a mentor you both have to be able to – I would have to look at myself hoping I was able to identify how I could offer guidance or whether I needed to offer guidance, or whether I needed to give it back to the person (2).*

One mentor described mentoring as *big brother stuff (1) and role modelling appropriate behaviour in a positive way, that young people would mimic (1).*

*...as a Youth Worker you still have to work with adults and give them information about stuff, especially if they are concerned about their kids. But with mentoring I think that it would be really important to know how kids take things on board, and I was never taught that. So there is no mentoring stuff done in a youth work degree (1).*

This mentor had also witnessed adult mentors working in mentoring roles. *I've seen mentoring between adults... I see mentoring as – between adults, I have heard of people having professional mentors where they would have one person that they don't go to for advice, but they go to for direction (1).*

In this process this mentor saw the mentor role as pointing a mentee in the right direction and that *they are not there to tell you what to do, or how to do it, but more to give you direction (1).*

This interviewee had experienced working alongside mentors in a previous job;

*They did mentor work with Aboriginal kids. And what I saw them doing was like big brother stuff. They would spend a lot of time, like kids would come from Juvenile Justice or whatever it is called now, and we gave them a mentor and the role of that mentor was to spend every day with their kid and what I saw was like mimicking, like the mentor would portray positive role modelling and it was hoped, as far as I knew, it was hoped that the kid would pick up on that (1).*

Similarly the other mentor had what might be considered lay theories or views of mentoring;

*I think mentorship, from my understanding the strict term, is that its not involved in the process but is there to offer guidance to be accessed as a resource, but for the person to be essentially going about their own stuff, with the common goal with the mentor being aware ...of the process where the person that's accessing the mentor is and how they got there and what they are likely to come up against. So that there is that – to be able to ask pertinent questions of the person – so that it stimulates what is within most people (2).*

The notion of various styles of mentoring was identified by this mentor and this included a belief that anybody could be a mentor to someone at the right time in the right place;

*And I suppose I identify different levels of mentoring in that the young people themselves – I believe that people have formal mentors who they seek out and then there are others that they sometimes attach themselves to, sometimes quite unknowingly, and as long as the whole accepting concept goes through into somebodies lifestyle, anybody can be a mentor and it doesn't necessarily have to be a long period of time, it can be just for one instance (2).*

After having delivered a pilot program prior to receiving any training as a mentor this mentor suggested that for young people mentors meant different things;

*...in say a group of six you might have one anger management, you might have one that has poor language control and another who has just no acceptance, even from family and so to each of them a mentor would possibly mean different things (2).*

Having a Youth Worker background was important for one mentor;

*I think if you are working with at risk kids in a mentoring role you need to have a youth worker background. I think it is really important, if you are working with at risk kids then you have to be able to define what at risk is (1).*

*Yeah I haven't actually thought about that before because what I was going to say was I have never worked with kids who aren't at risk – but I didn't know they were when I first met them. I am just reflecting on what I know now that I work with twenty kids on a Thursday and I know all of their backgrounds, but it is only because I have been there for two years, I was forgetting that when I first started I didn't know (1).*

Being a Youth Worker first was also seen as critical for the other mentor;

*Mentorship verses youth worker I think for me one comes first. The youth work basically comes first with me. The mentorship is able to be an option after that (2).*

The question of what constituted the differences between role modelling and mentoring was raised as a common theme in the interviews. One mentor had thoughts about this issue based upon observing other mentors in action;

*Maybe the kid would role model the mentor a bit differently. Yes so I thought the mentor's role was to show the kid how to behave. Not by telling them how to, but just by role modelling...and seeing how positive role modelling interacts in a society, maybe the kid would pick up on those qualities (1).*

*I don't know the definition of mentoring and how it differs to role modelling I would say that they are both the same thing. I don't know how I will feel at the end of this, but for now I don't know (1).*

Role modelling was seen as tool or opportunity for young people to access the mentor;



*So, in that way, my role modelling is – I expect that generally I will have my behaviour mirrored, and that is very helpful for me, that's a tool (2).*

Furthermore, trust needed to be established for mentoring to work;

*I suppose the first point is to establish trust with them, they have to be able to trust us, and for the mentorship to be taken on they have to have an idea that you have something to offer. So you have to establish trust and through positive role modelling then they get to know a bit about us and we get to know a bit about them and then we can identify areas where perhaps they could possibly need help (2).*

Role modelling and mentoring are fairly distinct but overlapping roles (2) but I think they can work hand in hand (2).

## **Theme 2: Professional skills.**

Professional skills, other than mentorship or even youth work, *per se*, were seen as crucial in working with young people. For both mentors those skills included having worked on your own issues, boundaries, honesty, listening skills, confidentiality, a non-judgemental attitude, and acceptance;

*I think if you are going to be a youth worker you have to keep – your whole life, you have to keep working on your stuff, otherwise you end up role reversing with kids and they end becoming your counsellor. (1)... boundaries is a big one...I think you have also got to be one who is prepared to get yourself skilled, because things have changed. (1) Things are changing and new theories and more modern methods of reasoning with kids are coming up (1).*

Similarly, for the other mentor, the qualities that were required in working with young people were *to be honest with them, to be aware of your own stuff, your own crap. If you haven't dealt with your own stuff, then be aware of it and be honest about it with them (2). You have to be flexible. You have to be able to cope. There are two or three hours of planning and it's out the window (2).*

Personal judgement, based on skilled assessment was as important as professional skills for this mentor as it was for the other;

*You have to be able to identify issues that are important to the young people, not issues that you think are important, don't place your own emphasise on stuff, you know, your theories that you think are important, they shouldn't be overlooked, but they are only important up to a point (2).*

### **Theme 3: Young People as agency.**

This issue speaks of a young person's ownership or agency in the learning process where a young people will approach the mentor, of their own accord, under certain conditions which are skilfully brought about by the mentor;

*Mentorship I see as being somebody who has had a foreign experience or through study or experience or background or whatever it is, that they have more knowledge than say another person. However it's not to direct people down a certain line, it is more to be used as a resource by the people, in this case, quite young people. If they get an idea that we have experience and knowledge of certain areas of life and then they come to us with their issues and we put options up and ask them where they would like to go and take those along with them (2).*

For the other mentor previous experience as a Youth Worker dictated that at one youth centre, kids have made their own space. They know it inside out and it is comfortable for them. It is like their territory (1).

Young people choose if and how they want to engage it is as much as how they see me as how I see them (1). Young people, if given the opportunity, will express their own needs the kids I had in my group asked to be split up again because they actually felt they were getting something done (1).

Another skill identified was flexibility: *you have to be flexible (2).*

Therefore, whatever the mentor felt was relevant, what was pertinent for the young person, at times, dictated the sessions;

*You have to be able to identify issues that are important for young people not issues that you think are important. Your own theories that you think are important, they shouldn't be overlooked, but they are important up to a point (2).*

*Again It is more about allowing them to personalize it for themselves.(2) I find that young people are the same, they build up layers of protection around them and you can't go and rip that off because it doesn't work. They can put up more layers quicker than you can rip them off, so it is a matter of them saying – OK I am going to allow that barrier to drop. I am going to share this with you (2).*

One mentor indicated that young people initiate and the professional then follows the lead *Kids ask questions and we get as much information as we can (1).*

#### **Theme 4: Adolescent developmental issues.**

Clearly, having been trained as Youth Workers meant that knowledge of issues specific to adolescence was required to be taken into account by the mentors in their work with young people;

*Young people accept what they are given as a whole. As they come into adolescence and get to experience other stuff it changes and they have this need to do things that are individual, yet they also have this need to belong (2).*

Both mentors spoke not only from text book understanding of developmental issues but also from their own experiences. For example, both mentors had never worked with young people who weren't at risk and one mentor commented on working with at risk kids in a way that evoked the notion that unique and personal circumstances of young people also needed to be included alongside generic issues of adolescence;

*I think understanding of people's realities – perceptions of those realities and allowing people to have a different perception, not having a fixed view of what is right or wrong, because it is different for everybody, especially working with kids at risk. You might have 12 at risk kids, you know in inverted commas, at the risk of labelling them. They can be identified as being 'at risk' by an organisation such as a school and you get them in a room and you have twelve totally different scenarios and each one has to be accessed in an individual fashion to a degree (2).*

Also the mentors experience and preferences seem to be important. As one mentor stated with regard to the developmental stage of the young people;

*I don't like working with year 8's because of the cognitive development between year 7 and the end of year 8, beginning year 9. I am not a childcare worker or a – I am not sure what it is called. I prefer and feel comfortable working with kids who are at least 14. It is said that it is never safe to assume – but it is easier for me to assume that somebody who is 14 is better cognitively developed than someone who has just come out of year seven straight into year eight because they are still with the primary school mentality. So for me age has a lot to do with who I felt good working with (1).*

*You know, as a parent, you're not born knowing the best thing for your kid. You're not born knowing about drugs and how to communicate with your kid and so I think that if there is something available and if you can afford it, then I think you should do some skilling (1).*

## **Theme 5: Creating learning ecology/contexts of mentoring.**

As Youth Workers, prior to their experience as mentors, the two interviewees perceived the environment surrounding their relationship with young people as important. There was a professional, if not common sense, understanding that the environment has an impact on young people and may have positive or negative effects on their interactions. Dynamics might change between participants in groups, for example, and sometimes this had a positive or a negative effect on mentor/mentee relationships.

Responding to a question that focused upon differences for young people who may have grown up in positive environments as opposed to those who might not have had security and safety one mentor stated;

*I suppose most of the kids I have been dealing with do not feel accepted and it is really hard to contemplate that one because I haven't had to deal with kids that have had, you know, a positive environment for the entire part of their life. However, when they have been in a positive environment they really shine. I see that as a differential, yes (2).*

The mentees had grown up in specific environments or ecologies. Youth Workers and schools constituted secondary layers of their ecologies.

Group work was cited as an advantageous context for facilitating trust or safety for group members to talk, for example;

*I think because we use group work to our advantage. Instead of being able to provide a service in a shorter period of time than we would normally be able to do it because the group is a safe place for most of these kids to be. They are known to each other and we sort of look at it very carefully to see if there is that safety there (2).*

*As far as the group versus individual – that's mainly the safety issue. Kids will participate because of that safety issue. They will open up about some stuff in the group whereas you would be hard pressed at the same time for doing it individually (2).*

On the other hand, groups could hamper the mentored space for some individuals. As one mentor commented;

*There was one guy that asked a lot of questions and I asked him how come you asking them now and not inside, and he said – because no one will fuckin shut up (1).*

Group dynamics were discussed by both mentors;

*If you have only got three kids who are rying to stir things up, but you've got three who actually want to learn something, these three I found tend to wind down a bit, being loud and boisterous isn't so funny anymore because they haven't got the other three to keep it going. So you sort of take them out of their comfort zone, and I don't think that's a negative thing because it shifts your perspective on things, and I had kids talking about stuff that I never dreamed they would open up about (1).*

*there were four sub issues and three sub grovns within that group of twelve (1).*

One sub group wanted to talk about legal issues and another wanted to talk about drugs, for example, but these people did not really want to talk about them in front of the other two groups (1). Thus, groups could also be counter productive.

Some groups were harder to work with than others regardless of group size;

*...it doesn't matter the size of the group because at one class that we did when we first started working you can have seven kids and that can be very hard work for two people (1).*

*...Sometimes it does feel like twelve against one and twelve against two and that's when you've really got to know your stuff because it can get really hard for two people to get it over on twelve, enough for them to start to realise that some of this stuff is interesting and important (1).*

Environments can be created by mentors or Youth Workers but young people are also seen to be active participants or agencies in shaping that environment;

*the kids that I had in my group asked to be split up again because they actually felt they were getting something done when it was only six kids and one worker it changed. The dynamics of the group changed. So you took them out of the environment they were in, and you also took them out of the social environment they were in and it was like working with a different bunch of kids - amazing (1).*

*Well, at the youth centre I work at, the kids have made that their space; they know it inside and out. We've got kids who have been there for 7 years and come along a couple of times a week, or you know, a couple of times a month, but that's their comfort zone. It has their tags, it has their music...It is like their territory (1).*

## **Theme 6: Gender/Culture.**

Some commentary that focused upon issues of gender and culture was elicited in these interviews. Both mentors agreed that the ecology of participants or context of mentoring have an effect on what occurs in the mentoring process. It is a small leap to the idea that the culture and gender of mentor and mentee would have an effect on what occurs in mentoring.

One mentor spoke about an all male group she was currently working with and the issue of acceptance of the mentor *vis a vis* the gender of the mentor as impeding the mentoring relationship;

*...now their respect is changing a bit, because we've got one group that is only male and they've been really accepting of me...I have spoken to them as a group and the questions I've answered – the question they have asked me has always been because you are not like them because you are cool, you talk to us, you listen to us. When they talk about women it's quite disrespectful, but then I said well you talk to me – what's going on? They were talking about female teachers in general (1).*

Similarly, the other mentor's experience around young people accessing him as a mentor was a sign of acceptance of an individual rather than as a male or female worker;

*I have had a lot of young girls access me and which seems to be an indication of the level of acceptance that I have that they would even try to discuss some of this stuff ...so it's almost as if there is an honesty and awareness between individuals and this is where I am at...especially with young people (2).*

Specific topics were of more interest to females than males and some topics might not have been relevant for, or of interest to, young men;

*The picture that I got was that the group that [M.2] had, the girls really wanted to talk about girls stuff and the guys did not want to. So I was looking at engaging these girls with where they were at because they had some really important issues, but you can't do that and keep these guys interested when all they want to do is run amok – so the girls wanted to talk, the guys wanted to play games (1).*



Culturally there may be divides too great to bridge for some mentors. One mentor commented on the hypothetical example of mentoring an Aboriginal person residing in a remote area. This issue had also to do with cultural gender roles;

*Hopefully I would never be able to mentor, say an Aboriginal person who lived in a remote community unless I had been a part of that community for quite some time or had extensive knowledge of how that community worked, because what is acceptable in my lifestyle, in the lifestyles that I have been exposed to would not necessarily be applicable to that society that I had no knowledge of. Especially around non-spoken gender roles. And that's quite often the case with remote societies. They have accepted roles that are a) Gender specific and b) not discussed (2).*

The other mentor concurred with this type of hypothetical scenario and felt strongly that specific and culturally differentiated mentoring would, in some cases, be necessary. However, having said that, this mentor also suggested self identification of Aboriginality as being important;

*I mean you can be Aboriginal, but you need to have that identified. Because you can have non-aboriginal people identified as being Aboriginal because they have grown up in an Aboriginal family. That's very prevalent in [...] there are quite a few kids up there who have been ditched, not legally, hut whose life has been – who have moved in with and lived with Aboriginal people their whole life, but they are white, but they strongly identify with their Aboriginal families (1).*

*...so you really have to figure out where people are coming from and how they are identified. You can have – I have this girlfriend who is Thursday Islander and she is black as black but she doesn't really identify as being a Thursday Islander. So looking at her and saying well she needs to be with an Aboriginal group or Aboriginal worker isn't true for her. She grew up in an English family. This has nothing to do with her Eastern States relatives because she was adopted (1).*

## **Theme 7: Intuition and ineffable experiences.**

The aforementioned themes included professional training and the understanding of mentor role and ecology. These were viewed as salient aspects of what occurs in interactions between young people and other professionals. An element that might come under the theme of 'intuition' was discussed substantially more by one mentor than the other.

An example given by that mentor focused upon a relationship with a young person that seemed unique to them both and this relationship seemed to facilitate shift in some special way. When asked to describe the particular qualities that had facilitated this process this mentor stated that;

*I think intuition has a lot to do with it. Whether you give it any credence or not I am quite an intuitive person when it comes to picking up on how people are feeling. And I don't know why they are thinking it but I have always been able to- and this is why I think I work effectively with kids is that I get an idea just by looking at someone, their body language (1).*

*And again I think intuition is a real – I don't think it is something you can learn (1).*

When asked what intuition meant for this mentor the response was;

*For me it is a clarity- it's like intuition it's like – just taking in the whole picture of the person the way they look at you, the way they are breathing, the way they are sitting, the way they- I don't know, the things that they are looking at around you (1).*

*I think it is about being sensitive to everything about a person – it is really difficult to put into words (1).*

*I think that is a lot about what intuition is really about. He was threatening me for whatever reason and I didn't take him seriously. What he was going through was serious, but I never felt like he was actually going to hurt me (1).*

Similarly for the other mentor there was, at times, an ineffable quality about making connections with young people as long as safe space was created;

*Like many people, the layers go on. I have worked from the point that nothing I suggest is ever a magic answer. And I don't know how to do it for you. All I can do is to suggest options, but that's really that safety issue again (2).*

*...you have to be aware of things; you have to be able to tune in. I have to constantly monitor myself, so that I know what I am looking for and what I am expecting (2).*

Both mentors referred to a process of letting go of control of specific situations. A mentor gave an example from an experience in a previous program;

*I just let it go. And he apologised half an hour later and told me why he had gone off his head at me. It had nothing to do with me, I was just lucky at the time when he was doing it that I know it had nothing to do with me (1).*

The other mentor similarly felt that *divorcing yourself from certain things (2)* was a quality of working with young people;

*Divorcing myself from a certain amount of control of the process and controlling what the goal should be. Certainly means divorcing yourself from the glory that could be the end of it but it has nothing to do with me (2).*

*You have to be able to be aware of things; you have to be able to tune in (2).*

M.I.'s response to "There was something in you that felt something?" was;

*Yes, oh yes. That to me is what intuition is all about. It's about taking in the whole picture, and I know he wasn't going to hurt me. If it had been someone else I would have been terrified, you know....it was just something I picked up on (1).*

Perhaps intuition arose from a combination of personal experience, professional skills and pure gut instinct; although this mentor did not feel youth work skills were a factor in the intuition process;

*I think I just dealt with it as [just me] I don't think any of my youth work skills came into it. I think I was dealing with it solely on a personal basis – because when someone gets in your face like that you sort of forget everything (1).*

This mentor recounted a narrative of an encounter with a young person where the relationship that developed between them was based on some ineffable quality that neither of them could name;

*I can't really put my finger on it because I don't know, all I know is that I stayed and he just opened up to me....he used to glare at me for a while, you know. And he actually got involved in activities we were doing and the next week it was the same, because we went into a park and had a barbeque and it was the same, he came and spoke to me and not – I think it was because I was willing to accept him (1).*

*It's ridiculous, it is so hard to put into words – it's the one thing that stands out. Out of all the kids we have worked with, that's the one thing that really stands out, and I don't know how I did it (1).*

Thus, despite being trained and skilled or experienced and knowledgeable others, an ineffable quality guided these mentors to forging connections or relationships with

the young people. Perhaps intuition can be viewed as a skill. Perhaps the closeness to their experiences left these mentors without descriptors that may come at a later date.

#### **4.1.2 Themes from post program interviews.**

Seven themes, including specific sub themes, arose from these interviews. These being, 1) Role of the mentor; 2) Professional knowledge and skills; 3) Young people as agency; 4) Contexts of mentoring; 5) Adolescent developmental issues; 6) Gender /culture; and 7) Inter subjectivity, ineffability and fortuitous encounters. Numerical suffixes at the end of each quote will indicate distribution of the data, as with the initial interviews. Quotes will be in italics. Various school locations will be denoted by the letters w, x, y, z.

##### **Theme 1: Role of mentor.**

The post program interviews took place after each mentor had undergone training for the role of mentor and had run several programs. They had also had time to hone skills that they spoke about in the first interview and to apply their thoughts and theories about mentoring.

A theme that came up time and again for one mentor was that of just being able to be themselves when in their mentoring role, as opposed to being either a Youth Worker or mentor. Because mentoring can mean so many different things, it is possible that it is not a role that one can take on like a counsellor or Youth Worker which is, relatively, more clearly defined;

*I was just [me] in there. Because, for a start, I didn't have any official mentoring skills. I didn't have any qualifications at the time so I think I went in with what I knew. I couldn't help but be a youth worker because that's what I am. When I was there I wasn't actually thinking about what role I was – I wasn't conscious of what role I was there as, other than my job, but it just came because I had done three years of work with kids. Before I started it was really hard to distinguish what role I am in. I knew I was in mentor role because that was my job (1).*

Furthermore, it seemed that the role of mentor was too complex for this person to define;

*My understanding of mentoring gets less, the more I thought I knew what mentoring was...During the program I thought I knew what mentoring was. But now – no. I don't think mentoring is something you can write 'this is what mentoring is'. You might be able to – you might have a theory behind it and the model, but personally I can't see it (1).*

The other mentor spoke more of an evolving understanding of the role of mentor;

*In all facets – I found myself able to work more as a mentor as the programs progressed (2).*

Furthermore, the mentoring process itself was seen as an evolving process and I would see it as an evolving thing where each side becomes more comfortable (2).

Previous professional or life experiences were seen as an important extra dimension to mentoring;

*...you could write a book on it and you could read a book about mentoring and get to the end and still think I'm not sure what it is. So I think you need... I think what you need is - if you are going to employ somebody to be a mentor, is – like I am sure you can go to TAFE and do mentoring skills and learn to be a mentor. But I don't think you can do it unless you have got other experiences (1).*

Similarly for the other mentor;

*I see my life experience as being valuable because it has been spent in a certain way and it has given me cause to look at entirely different lifestyles through a lot of different people through a lot of different situations I have been in. And the study I have done in conjunction with that I think allows me to bridge that gap. So I think there is a need for specialised Youth Workers. I think there is a need for having a social sense of a mentor program that can be built into every aspect of say a high school situation (2).*

The process of mentoring added another dimension to the professional and personal growth of one mentor;

*It also brought another dimension to how I looked and how I had to work and what I was actually offering. It became a broader – I'll just have to think of that carefully...yes, I think the expanded role was good for me as well as for the people I was working with. And that's where I think I found that I had a lot more to offer than I previously had. I reflected a great deal...and yes I think I grew a hell of a lot more personally. It certainly expanded my concept of what could be done, and whilst I always had a good idea of the fact that young people are underestimated in their abilities and talents, it exploded some of the myths about what they are willing to accept (2).*

Contrary to M.1, who seemed to have a less clear understanding of the mentor's role, M.2 felt empowered by the addition of the mentor role to that of Youth Worker. Here, again, the role and work of mentoring added to the personal and professional quality of this person's life. This would have had positive flow on effects for the mentees and for others he would work with;

*I suppose it is about where that whole thing between role model, youth worker and mentor blend, and that, for me, was probably the greatest thing I got out of it was, I feel, a much better worker – not just with young people – but with people in general, having honed skills myself (2).*

Never-the-less, despite a lack of clear role definition of mentoring for her, M.1 also found the experience to be a positive one. The mentoring experience provided further professional growth;

*I found it to be a really positive experience, but scary as hell. But I found it positive because I got stuff from the kids – it wasn't just me going in and talking to kids and my hoping to teach them something. I think I got a lot out of it too, because I have come away from that knowing more about how kids get things, what it is that makes them go – oh yes – rather than that blank look you get from them (1).*

Mentoring was seen as providing relevance and practical skills for young people. Mentors were seen, at some point, as having something to offer;

*Once we brought the relevance to their lives into it, and assured them that we were working for them, and not for our own betterment, then things were able to turn around where they would approach us about certain things. Even down to conflict at school within their peer groups and stuff like that – situations on the streets, situations in the town (2).*

*So helping them hone their skills was really a good thing. And that's where a lot of the mentorship came in. Because they go away and do what they wanted to do, they wanted to try what they wanted to try, how they wanted to try and when they wanted try it (2).*

Role modelling also occurred consistently in the mentoring space;

*They role model you and I can say from experience and seeing the kids that we worked with in our program, that they do. Kids will model you, and don't change your boundaries (1).*

Did mentoring differ from youth work and role modelling? This question links to the literature. For one mentor this was simply too complex a process to give a specific answers to;

*I think it all comes under one big – in one big group – and you just – it's like rolling up pastry – just. I can't answer that, that's really difficult (1).*

### ***Role Modelling.***

Role modelling was seen as one function of being a mentor;

One mentor spoke about a *role model, youth worker and mentor blend* (2).

This mentor reflected on stages where there may have been distinct processes of role modelling and mentoring;



*I think, with myself, it would have been a natural progression to go from role modelling to mentor (2).*

*It is difficult to separate where role modelling goes into mentorship in stages because, looking back, I can see how I occupied both camps, with a foot in each, and dangling in between – and moving back and forwards and retaining that flexibility as was needed (2).*

And again;

*I think mentoring comes after they accept you. They accepted me and trusted me. Until that time there was role playing, positive role modelling That played a big part in – so by suspending my judgement in certain respects that were personally affronting to me to not react to them. It was huge (2).*

One mentors' description of the mentoring role comes close to what is defined in the literature as 'identification';

*...when you are talking to a young person – a kid – and they get the idea that you've been through a pretty crappy childhood yourself, I think that can be quite helpful because, especially with 'at risk kids' ....If they bring something up and you go – yeh. I think if they sort of know that maybe you come from a similar background to them and that you've made it to adulthood and you have a good job, maybe this sounds a bit idealistic, but I think it might inspire a bit of hope, a bit of – oh OK I can get through this too (1).*

Providing an almost a classical definition of mentoring one mentor said;

*I put as many options at them as I can and then explore it with them to see which one they chose to go with and then that allows them to use their skills and resources within, and practice those skills and make their mistakes and have me there as a sounding board to work through that stuff – until they get more practice to develop themselves. And I think probably in a tribal sense we had the opportunities to do that with our relatives that don't exist these days, even extended families live vast*

*distances apart so – that's probably fulfilling that – it's fulfilling a number of roles (2).*

Elements of mentoring included; *fulfilling a number of roles (2); being like the parent who wouldn't listen (2); being an adult who would listen (1); having a positive adult relationship (1); assisting young people in taking the reins themselves (2); helping young people to deal with difficult adults in conflict situations (2); we had researched subjects that they didn't know how to find information for (1); assisting young people in honing skills (2)* - all the elements of classic mentoring.

Having had time to reflect on the role of mentoring and having been prompted to do so by the first round of interviews did not appear to make the task of defining it any easier for those involved. Mentoring had definitive aspects to it but at the same time also seemed to elude definition. The experience of mentoring took it beyond the classical or theoretical conceptualisations of it into a deeper realm of personal experience for these mentors. There was something special or elusive about this experience that made it; *like trying to nail jelly to the wall (1).*

## **Theme 2: Professional knowledge and skills.**

Both mentors acknowledged a number of qualities such as specialised skills, study, and professionalism as essential for working effectively with young people as mentors. One mentor answered the question 'could anyone go in as an adult and mentor young people' with;

*No...because I think you need to have youth work experience to do it. Because all you do, every day that you work, you just work with kid (1).*

*I don't think just anyone could do it. I think that a lot of people have the right intentions. I think people with the right intentions need training. I think anyone can do it as long as they get some experience behind them before they try and be a mentor. Because you have to do so much of your own work, and you have to have a really tight grip on why you are there (1).*

The other mentor viewed mentoring as the next phase or stage after having implemented a youth work analysis;

*...and I think that was because the kids that we essentially dealt with had been damaged by adults. And overcoming that in the first place – this number one step was where the youth work skills were imperative (2).*

*We were actually able to identify some of the teaching staff and support staff at schools in a way that the young people then considered that they were available to them previously, and put them in through those people where they now see them as being a helpful aid in dealing with some of the conflicts that arise at school (2).*

*I see that there is a need for specialised Youth Workers (2); and I guess the youth work side of it is covering the ground that is not touched by teachers and parents (2).*

The same view was adamantly held by the other mentor, in particular in working with 'at risk' young people;

*If you are talking particularly about mentoring young people, I would really make sure that the person had appropriate youth work skills (1).*

*...but you know, people talk about 'high at risk' and 'low at risk' and, it's really hard to define. But working with the kids that we were, that the school identified as being kids 'at risk' – so we had this sort of assumption – I don't think just having a mentoring credential would be enough (1).*

*I probably wouldn't trust that person who only mentors adults – with kids. There is that experience that you need to have to work with kids (1).*

Other skills perceived as important by both mentors were listening, boundary keeping, being able to validate young people, being non-judgemental, having worked through 'your own stuff', planning and being able to identify young people's needs. There was a sense for these mentors that mentoring would not have been possible if they had not had youth work skills prior to developing the role of mentor.

Developing trust between mentor and mentee was another skill that was essential in building or facilitating the mentoring relationship.

### ***Trust***

Basic, human qualities of care, openness, honesty and listening were markedly important for these two mentors. Building trust was a critical element to creating an open or inviting space for mentees to approach the mentors;

*I think mentoring comes after they accept you. They accepted me and trusted me. Until that time there was role playing, positive role modelling (2).*

When asked what was happening between this mentor and the young people, the response was;

*They were being valued, they were being heard. They weren't being put down, stereotyped. They quite often try to live up to the tag that the school had given them, because it is a tag that is such a defence mechanism for them with the teachers (2).*

Gaining trust was difficult and required time, patience and determination;

*Some kids don't trust us. You find quite few kids who are so used to having no one listen to them, are so used to being restricted, that if you go in and say this is your time and space and we are here for you, clam right up, because they don't trust you. I get asked a lot – do you work for welfare ... (1).*

On the other hand;

*Some kids were craving it, and soon as you tell them they are allowed to have it – they take it, no problem, that's great (1).*

Other elements to having a trusting relationship included building rapport, being honest, respecting and valuing young people, being an adult who listened and accepting them;

*Without exception everybody that we worked with stated that they enjoyed having us because we listened and treated them with respect and didn't pull them down (2).*

For this mentor the central issue in working with these young people was trust;

*I would say that – for me it was – the whole thing was based around trust and I think that if the young people can see that that isn't happening, if that focus is not about their issues, then they will become reluctant and very hard to deal with and of course then the focus and all their energy goes into being reluctant, resisting things (2).*

And again;

*...once they had shown that they were willing to come to the party those young people moved through a hell of a lot of resistance very quickly and adopted us more in that mentoring role far more easily (2).*

Love was mentioned by one mentor almost as a definitive yet difficult thing to provide;

*...and all young people and kids want is recognition, acknowledgement, the love that can be given and quite often that's the easiest thing for people to afford, but the hardest thing for people to give (2).*

### **Theme 3: Young People as agency.**

Regardless of how the mentoring relationship was perceived and enacted by the mentors, young people were seen as arbiters of the pace of accepting a relationship with mentors;

*It was really obvious for some of them. Some of them were really at that place where they could accept a mentor in their lives (2).*

*They are going to try and test, and they will test and test and test until they trust it. And within the six weeks program it was pretty interesting to see how quickly some of them really reached out and wanted some guidance and were looking for it (2).*

*They tried to find out what our expected outcomes were. And when they found that it was an individually tailored thing, that we didn't have any specific outcomes in mind, but if somebody out there was closer to being a happier person, then their life was going to be better because they had learnt some stuff that was to enable them to control their lives. That was huge for them. (2).*

*Again, and you have a hard time stopping them from learning. They become sponge like (2).*

Young people evaluated themselves and their processes, a basic tenet of social learning. Skills or new ideas were provided in the mentored space and the mentees for whom those skills were relevant would practice them;

*...when they came back from their holidays, a lot of the issues that were brought up there were good indicators to us to what they had taken on board and what they hadn't. What they had actually gone away and discussed amongst themselves and come back and presented to us – and thought about – was pretty huge (2).*

*And groups become self-monitoring, so if you go in there 'I know everything and you are never going to know anything about me', they'll give you a hard time (1).*

One mentee saw one of the mentors some months after their program finished and wanted to speak about his experience;

*He told me about his maths thing and rabbited on and then was gone again...I was the one he needed to tell about it. He saw me and for whatever reasons a light went on in his head and he thought – I need to tell [Mentor A] this...so I became an important enough influence in that six weeks for him to choose to tell me that, because he didn't have to (1).*

Some young people who were not involved in the mentor program sought out mentees who might have been perceived as peer mentors,

*Because they could see that they were lacking in some of this stuff too, and elevated some of the people we worked with to a position where they were actually being accessed by their peer group...self-directional (2).*

This process of self agency in engaging mentors also meant that young people might choose to not engage. That is young people will open up to a relationship when they are ready;

*Some kids as soon as you tell them they can talk about anything they want, they don't trust that you aren't going to tell anyone. They think that you are going to report back to school so they really clam up (1).*

#### **Theme 4: Contexts of mentoring.**

This theme came arose in two forms. The first was about the context in which the program was set. The second was the context within the program and had to do with group styles and sizes.

##### ***Setting.***

The context in which the program was facilitated was primarily educational or school setting. Some of these schools, as demonstrated through the contact with teaching staff or health staff, might have been more or less. conducive to creating a positive acceptance of the program and or the participants;

*I think that what made a huge difference was talking to staff at staff development day. Because schools have real cultures about them and it can be cultural, not factual, that the school doesn't support it, doesn't support the program. But once the teachers know that it's not that we have a huge thing about behaviour management or whatever they call it. I think that once you talk to individual teachers the environment changes because teachers get it and will ask questions about it, they find out definitely what it is and what it isn't that you are trying to achieve. So that sets up a completely different environment for the program to run too. Because you have*

*teachers supporting you and saying – I've really noticed that this kid has changed (1).*

*Whereas if they don't know what it is and are only hearing from the person you made contact with – the primary contact in the school – that primary contact may not necessarily support the program, even though the program is at the school, it doesn't mean that they support it. So they can set up an environment of hostility and teachers say things like – they say things to the kids like – the program isn't working – you are still acting up (1).*

*And in particular where the school staff had a view that it was pretty much a waste of time, but they were doing it under protest, to prove their point, the young people seemed to be aware of this and almost fulfilled their expectations (2).*

*Whereas one school in particular where, when we took stuff to the school about the issues that were being raised by the young people and they at first quite hostile and reluctant to do anything but then I think they must have had a bit of a think about it and came back to us and asked us and we gave them some more feedback (2).*

*I think there is a need for having a social sense of a mentor program that can be built into every aspect of, say, a high school situation, secondary school situation. That would involve – that would have to involve teaching staff and admin support staff to narrow that gap so that each part can come towards the centre (2).*

Other macro levels of the ecology in which the program was set included the families and parents of the youth participants;

*And because we didn't know a lot of the systems that they were working within – we had our glimpse of what they told us, but it was only that they told us and we didn't have a full concept of what that was (2).*

*I think social environment has a lot to do with it.... If I am answering this correctly, I find that kids from different areas are all different. Kids from [ x ] have totally different issues than kids from [ y ] and [ z ]. And a lot of that comes from transport issues because a lot of what they do depends on where they are. If kids had a feeling*



*of being stuck, I think that their behaviour is totally different to kids who have the freedom of where to go. The social environment at home I know plays a huge part in a kids issues and behaviour (1).*

### **Group style and dynamics.**

The second theme that emerged in relation to context was the ecology of the program itself. This usually had to do with group size, style and length of program;

*In this program you have to be a lot more spontaneous because you only have two hours in that environment and sometimes kids will ask you questions that you do not know the answers to, but you have to figure out what it is they really want to know...I think that the kids knew also that they were under pressure in that small amount of time too, and things were really condensed (1).*

*Concentrated – so basically all we were trying to do was compact maybe six months work into six weeks (1).*

*In respect of that sometimes, that's where I saw the six weeks as being restrictive. I think that from a mentor's role, it needs to be ongoing over a longer period of time (2).*

The other mentor had previously worked with young people over greater periods of time and noted the difference between that experience and that of working with this program;

*...because working in youth centres you have a period of time to develop relationships and get to know how kids work and how particular individuals work. But because the mentor program was with kids I had not worked with before, and it was only six or eight weeks depending how long we had with the kids we had to learn to read the kids quickly and what their body language meant and what their sideways glances at each meant (1).*

Both mentors had to contend with group sizes and dynamics. Some mentees seemed invested in the process of what was being offered, others not so. Personal styles of the

mentors came into play and group dynamics would change if some groups had to be divided in half because of behavioural issues;

*They were certainly allowed to have their opinion on something that was happening to them right now, or had just happened or could happen in the future and they weren't chastised for having thought processes that were not considered mainstream – and from that position people were then able to move to considering other people's opinion's from within the group, and from that I suppose we then started working in more of a mentor role (2).*

*Yes and so you come into a group. And last week you know that those two were solid friends and then to come in and they aren't talking any more and then there are other people who don't like her because she's upset with the person across the room. So how the group works changes .Even if they don't want to talk about it, you can tell because they aren't sitting next to each other (1).*

*And groups become self-monitoring, so if you go in there – I know everything and you are never going to know anything about me, they'll give you a hard time (1).*

## **Theme 5: Adolescent developmental issues.**

The developmental stage of adolescence was acknowledged by both mentors;

*...the difference between working with adults and young people is that adults quite often have an experiential base behind them that they can draw on - young people don't and quite often they are about to make all the big mistakes (2).*

The need to belong may not be exclusive to young people but is seen to be an important part of their need for friendship and testing their place in the world. An example is that of the young person who kept smoking in order not to completely lose his friendship base.

One mentor noted developmental shifts even from one year group to the next;

*Both groups of kids, Years nine and ten, have expectations when you come back a second time, but the younger kids, their expectations are – we are going to get out of class and we are going to get lollies and it will be a much looser format than class is going to be and there is going to be more of a chance to run amok, you know. The older kids they have expectations too, but it seems to me their expectations are – we are going to get something out of this (1).*

*I found with the girls at [x] that dynamics changed, especially in year nine. Yes even that is different. Year ten the kids sort of seem to have their mates. Year nine they are still trying to figure it out – I don't like you anymore, you aren't coming to my party – you kissed my boyfriend, that sort of thing (1).*

The other mentor seemed to echo these thoughts;

*There is a readiness for all of them but they are all at different stages (2).*

The need to have at least one listening or hearing adult was viewed as important for one mentor and the literature suggests that adolescents will seek out adults to talk about certain issues if they see those issues as pertinent to their personal situation.

This mentor felt that being available as possibly the only listening adult in an adolescent's life was, in fact, the most important process in the twelve months of working as a mentor;

*Yes. Being an adult who listened that's the one – well really the only –. There are lots of things come off that but that's the only real positive thing that came off that I think was that...I don't think there are a lot of adults in those kid's lives...I don't think they have older adults who will say – this is your space, you talk. What do you want to know? What can I do for you, this is all about you. So I think having a positive adult relationship is the biggie – whether they got anything out of it or not or which – most of them did I'm sure – but at the end of the day if they got nothing else out of it they at least had an adult (1).*

Despite generic adolescent needs and developmental issues, mentors cannot work with young people from a generic model;

*...because every kid will change something in that model. You have to have one for each kid. I think you might start off with the basic outline and give it a go and if that doesn't work you have to cross something off and put – this child – and i think there needs to be a model for every kid with their name on top. And then the next week we'd have to change it again because something shifts in their life (1).*

A basic human need is play and enjoyment. Enjoyment and spontaneity may be seen as just as important as professional skills, agency of young people or mentoring *per se*. Playing or creating a space for play for these young people, for example, proved to be one thing this mentor felt these young people had missed out on;

*It was just totally then. I can't think of any way to say OK this is what I'm doing. One thing I did find though is letting kids do childish things, play childish games. Really weird, but like I said we played – duck, duck goose and we had the kids who were, you know, tough as brass nails playing duck duck goose and loving it. And because they enjoyed it so much you kind of get the feeling that it's not something that they had a lot to do with in their cognitive years. They might have missed out on some of that stuff (1).*

*We allowed them to play and not be ridiculed in a space where they felt comfortable (1).*

*Because we were letting them be kids and not laughing at them and encouraging them, and having fun with them and showing that being an adult was not all about being serious, that we can run around and joke (2).*

## **Theme 6: Gender/Culture.**

One of the mentors (M.2) left the agency about two months before the completion of the twelve month project period, and another mentor, an Aboriginal male (M.3) was employed for the duration of the last few programs (refer to section 3.2.1 in Chapter Three). The mentor that remained (M.1) was then in a position of having experienced working with two different personalities.

This was commented upon with regard to the issue of gender or culture of mentors;

*But if I hadn't worked with [M.3] I would probably still feel that it was gender based. But now that I have worked with [M.3] my opinion has changed a bit (1).*

*I would say that it depends on individual mentors. Like if [M.2] and [M.3] went together – they were two totally different workers. So I don't think it matters (1).*

*Now in hindsight I would say personality comes into it a lot (1).*

Having worked with another mentor meant that this person had changed thoughts about how necessary it might be to have to work with gender specific groups e.g. male mentor to male group. However, there was more than one occasion that groups were divided into separate gender based groups for various reasons such as sexual tension or behavioural issues;

*There were definitely tensions at [w] that needed the group to be split because they were just too overtly sexual and I don't know where that came from but it was there and there was nothing we could do about it (1).*

### **Theme 7: Inter subjectivity, ineffability and fortuitous encounters.**

In the post program interview, as with the initial interviews, there seemed to be ineffable moments, that is, experiences that seemed indefinable or hard to put into words. When asked if there were other issues involved in what happened in mentoring, the complexity of the process became apparent when one mentor said;

*Yes, it's one of the things, it was really hard to get a sort of picture of how it might work, because there is shit loads of stuff to take into account and you don't know it. But you couldn't just tell someone how to run the program (1).*

Despite having professional training and knowledge, in the end, other qualities facilitated positive experiences for the mentees;

*I think it was just that – what I've just been talking about – the respect, allowing people, whether it's right or wrong to have an opinion, not trying to force them through something but allow them to work through it at their own pace (2).*

*Some kids will just sit there looking at you and you know that you have made a connection on whatever level (1).*

And again;

*but if you can get a kid to look you in the eye when you're talking about something – you think – ah, got you. And really subtle stuff but sometimes I find that's the hardest thing because you know that that kid's had an experience and where do you go from there...(1).*

No matter what practices are put into place – skills, young people's energy, or ecology - in the final analysis;

*...there is nothing concrete at the end of it and it just depends on what day of the month (1).*

One mentor was guided by subtle signs such as the way a mentee would look at them and would intuitively know that something positive had happened. *Totally opportunistic, chanced and spontaneous* (1) were words used by this mentor attempting to describe what processes were involved in creating positive experiences with the mentees;

*I don't know how kids take things in because each kid is different. So just go on and do your thing until you see someone go – oh – until you find some kid looking at you, like I said before, then you know you've got them, then you know that whatever you have been doing is right (1).*

Sometimes words failed her;

*It was just totally then, I can't think of any way to say - OK this is what I'm doing (1).*

For the other mentor love and acknowledgement were important;

*all young people and kids want is recognition, acknowledgement, the love that can be given (2).*

Acknowledging traits that the young person themselves could not see was important;

*...we started identifying traits that we saw within them as people that they weren't aware that we were able to identify – and that, quite often, was the mentorship for some (2).*

Thus, issues of timing, right moments, chanced moments, nothing concrete and the way some young person might look at you were symbols or signs of the indescribable or 'magical' moments of mentoring. These issues might be considered as significant within the inter subjective space between mentor and mentee. Certainly Bandura referred to the concept of fortuitous events where there are at times more than just individual and environmental determinants of behaviours and interaction. The concept of fortuitous events is given some credibility in the data presented here and warrants further exploration.

## **4.2 SECTION TWO: MENTEES.**

Three key themes arose out of the analysis of mentee responses. These included mentor/mentee relationship; immediate relationships, particularly with teachers and; shifts or experiences of mentees.

Numerical suffixes will be attached to the end of quotes to determine the distribution of data. School One, Year Nine will be denoted by 1.9; School One, Year Ten by 1.10; and School Two, Year Ten 2.10. Verbal comments were voiced in a group context and individual comments in this context were not noted with marks indicating school and year group. While some students may have been more outspoken than others the researcher ensured that all students were encouraged to make at least one or more comments by directly asking them if they had not already offered any comments.

The responses from these young people expressed both clearly identifiable experiences and relatively ineffable experiences.

In order to ensure a reasonably fair distribution of comments from each of the identified themes the researcher has included verbal comments from different year/school group as well as adding comments from written sheets. Comments from feedback sheets are marked in the narrative below as 1.9s, 1.10s and 2.10s

### **Theme 1: The Mentor - Mentee relationship.**

Mentors were experienced as friends, brothers or sisters, as parents, they were seen as *one of us* according to most mentees. Classic mentor roles such as friend, advisor and walking alongside were experienced by many of these students;

*Mentors were like friends (1.9) mentors befriended us (1.10) were like older sister or brother or friend (1.10) At first it was like you got out of school, but in the end you made two friends (1.10) older friends (1.10s) were basically like fill in parents (2.10) yes they are more like an older friend that you can ask questions and advice too (1.10) it feels like we're talking to people that's in the same situation (1.10s) they understood what we were going through and they befriended us, rather than acting like they were better than us (1.10s) You can tell them anything really, they listen, not in one ear and out the other (1.10).*

Constructs such as identification and role modelling are alluded to in responses such as *they are like one of us* and *they've been there*. The psychoanalytic construct of identification has to do with the construction of the self or self identity. In literature on adolescent development the construction of self has to do with identity formation through a phase referred to as identification or self definition (Nurmi, 1997; Mitchell & Black, 1995; Waterman, 1992). Narrative from the mentees that suggested a process such as identification included;

*he had experiences like us (2.10) they know what you're talking about, because they've been there, they've had the experience (1.9) they're wiser, because they've been through and been there, they relate to us (1.10) [M.1] and [M.2] were different*



*from other adults, because they were like friends and talked the same way as us (1.10s).*

Trust, honesty, being non-judgemental, acceptance and being respectful was identified as being as important for the mentees as it was for the mentors. The quality of the friendship seemed to create that sense of respect and trust was described by one year ten student who qualified the process by adding that the mentors take time and treat them like individuals;

*They respected us, our opinions (1.9) they actually took the time and effort to be our friends and talk to us, not like another little brat, but as another person (1.10 s)*

*Mentors aren't labelling like teachers, nurses, counsellors – mentors don't pass information around about you (1.9) they respected us, our opinions (1.9) parents are too protective and go yeah, yeah, yeah – where mentors talked and had a chat about it (1.9) teachers betray us (1.10) because they listen to what you say (1.9) they treated us like adults (2.10) when we said something they would listen (2.10) we could be honest (2.10) he and she were very open and we could express our feelings (2.10) the mentor will sit and explain better (2.10) they don't think you're another brat (1.10) you feel free to talk [with mentors] (1.10) they feel and care about what you are saying (1.10).*

At least one student felt differently about the nature of the mentor relationship in that it was unlike typical mateship or friendship styles;

*with mates you have common things, likes in common, but sometimes they don't do it so you can't really talk to them (1.9).*

Thus, the notion of the mentor being similar to or the same as mentee, not just as a friend, was important.

## **Theme 2: Immediate relationships, particularly with teachers.**

Many of these respondents perceived teachers, by and large, pejoratively. Perhaps because of the 'at risk' status of these adolescents which included poor conflict resolution, drug use and anger or violence issues, they were possibly attracting

negative attention from some teachers and possibly family members. This, in turn, may have led to alienation of the students within the school setting.

Mentors, compared to teachers in the classroom situation, were perceived as being different. They were perceived as more friendly and as closer to real life and as less punitive.

Mentors were considered less judgmental than teachers;

*mentors don't judge – see past that (1.10), didn't use or show power, like teachers (1.9), mentors were seen as teaching in a different manner (2.10). They [mentors] answered differently – like the teachers just yell, the mentors didn't (1.9). It's different from class – the mentor program was more friendlier (1.9) You learn more in the mentor program than class because this is actually life (1.10).*

Many comments seemed to reflect the immediate ecology or contextual relationships that, for these students, were relationships with teachers. Those relationships were viewed in a negative way;

*For many of these participants teachers were seen as ...trapped in a small world (1.10) or use their authority – just to keep us in line (1.9) or in one ear and out the other (2.10). Teachers aren't out there, they can't connect, they've lost their inner child (1.10) Teachers are the ones with problems (1.10) Can't be honest with teachers (1.9) students have set rules and teachers have rules and they take it too serious (1.10) don't have an honest or open space at school (1.10).*

One succinct statement that seemed to sum up these numerous sentiments, in answer to “How do you think the program worked for you?” was;

*It worked for me because they helped us with problems that teachers and others could not (1.10s).*

The relationships with teachers also changed as the programs progressed;

*It gave me a better picture of how important school is (2.10) helping me talk to teachers the way you should (1.9s).*

Conversely, one student saw the program also as affecting teachers. That is, parts of their human environment were also changing;

*The program made teachers more aware (1.10).*

### **Theme 3: The shifts or experiences of the mentees.**

The participants were asked to describe their experience of mentors and mentoring and what it meant for them. A key theme that arose from the question 'how do you think the program worked for you' was what students perceived as indicators of shifts in their own lives. The 'how' of mentoring was interpreted as the 'what' happened. In other words, to the mentees the process of mentoring was not as important as the meaningfulness to them of the outcomes.

One development or shift was identified by the student who chose a photo of a football player taking a mark;

*they taught us about reaching for goals (1.9).*

Others participants were even more specific about changes that happened for them;

*changed my views towards Aboriginals because I was a racist (2.10); let it all out, instead of bottling it up inside, if you leave it to bottle up you smash stuff (2.10); It helped me to stop drugs and smoking. Helped me not to be so violent (1.10s); It helped me get out of school (1.9).*

These experiences speak to the notion that, beyond merely being a way of developing relationships *per se* or simply being another teaching method or technique, mentoring seems to have a special quality of facilitating shifts in attitudes or perceptions or behaviours based on a range of processes including role modelling, identification, advising and facilitator.

As one student put it;

*it's new, social and fun (1.10).*

For some students the mentoring experience was mixed. This may have been indicative of mixed feelings about the program or ambivalence about their own goals. For example at least one young person, *it didn't work coz I'm still on drugs*. However, for this participant, mentors were seen as different from other adults precisely because *...most adults don't talk about drugs – weed (1.9s)*. Another participant to the question 'how do you think the program worked for you' said *it helped me get out of school* and mentors were seen as *they understand more (1.9s)*.

The mentors or the mentoring process created shifts in mentee's perceptions, beliefs and attitudes as well as behaviours. Therefore identifying these shifts and interpreting them as such, rather than interpreting them simply as outcomes or 'benefits' of mentoring may address the question of 'what occurs in the mentoring process'. These shifts were meaningful experiences.

### ***Behavioural***

Students easily named many behavioural changes and these kinds of changes were reported in much of the literature. These changes were specifically linked to the relationship with the mentors, as it was in the literature;

*it helped me to stop drugs and smoking. Helped me not to be so violent (1.10s); They showed us different ways to handle different situations and made us aware of our rights (1.10); I've stopped some of the things that I did, and I don't always resort to violence (1.10s); we could express our feelings and I got to tell [ M.3] my problems (2.10s); it's changed us by, before, if someone did something, I'd throw a punch or yell. Not now - I think (1.9).*

### ***Beliefs and attitudes***

*Helped me see not all old people in schools are people that are out to get me (1.10s) helped me understand my life and my rights more (1.9s).*

Another student wrote about a shift in behaviour that led to a new view of the self;

*And [they] talked to us about drugs, but it was good, because they weren't pounding us not to do it, they made us aware of the consequences and dangers. It made me think about it more. I didn't think I would change what I was doing at the time, but in the end, now I think about it I have changed (1.10s).*

### ***Perceptions***

The ways these students viewed themselves, their schooling and teachers changed;

*totally looked at teachers differently (1.10); I got a different perspective of the way a teacher works (2.10s); it gave me a better picture about how important school is (2.10s); mentors make you feel better (1.10).*

### ***Emergence***

The title of this theme was difficult to pin point but certain narratives of some students seemed to need some special category. Personal growth might have been another theme.

One student chose a photo (see Appendix Five) of a person walking through rain with sunshine and said;

*it's a new journey, your finding out what's hiding...the dark bits are hidden, the light and rain, it's like coming through (1.10).*

The photo was worth a thousand words and the theme of emergence later sprung to the researchers mind. Other statements suggested the theme of growth;

*It helped me gain confidence (1.9s); Learning life – what you can be (1.10); It helped me understand where I was in my life (1.10s).*

Some experiences were more ephemeral. One student chose a photo of a space supanova and said *it was outta there* (1.9).

Thus the experience of what happened in mentoring for these students were identified around themes of shifting attitudes, behaviours and perceptions. Goals were reached and themes of emergence were highlighted.

### **4.3 SECTION THREE: SUMMARY.**

The mentors viewed the mentoring process as multifactorial and rewarding. They benefited from the process in personal and professional ways and their roles included several tasks such as modelling, facilitating, teaching, advising, tutoring, and friendship. Facilitating trust in their protégés was viewed as crucial to the mentoring process and mentees were viewed as arbiters in the process, contributing to the quality of groups and accessing mentors, as they needed them.

The mentors viewed mentoring as an activity impacted by several layers of the context in which the mentoring process took place. These layers included the group setting, school and family environment. The mentors felt that while cultural and gender issues were important, the personal qualities of the mentor were just as important, if not more so. What happened in the mentoring process depended on the personality of the mentors and mentees and variables such as adolescent development issues, gender and culture.

Fortuitous determinants such as spontaneous moments of fun and special connections between mentor and mentee affected the mentoring process. Mentoring was viewed as an inter subjective process that involved a co-construction of experience and knowledge between mentor and mentee.

Mentees described mentors as advisors, friends, and teachers; respectful and non-judgemental. They perceived the mentors as being different to other adults particularly their teachers, who they viewed pejoratively. Mentoring was perceived as a positive experience for these students and one that affected their immediate context that brought change to their attitudes towards their teachers. Mentees experienced changes in perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. Some of these changes took

place at a deep level and were difficult to define. These students viewed these changes as a direct outcome of their relationship with the mentors. The theme of mutual growth for mentor and mentee was supported in the narratives of mentees as well as that of the mentors.

What occurs during the process of mentoring is a dynamic interaction that is profoundly meaningful to mentors and mentees where those meanings need to be validated and understood. Methodologies that can understand complex meanings will need to be taken into consideration in future research upon mentoring.

The next chapter discusses the compacted themes from the interviews with the mentors and from the mentee feedback groups. This discussion is related back to the literature. A comparative analysis of the mentors' pre and post program narrative is used in this chapter to answer the question 'can anyone be a mentor?' A comparative analysis of the mentor and mentee narratives is conducted thereby validating several similar themes and highlighting differences in their narratives.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 DISCUSSION OF THEMES.

This chapter links the literature that was examined in Chapter Two to the themes as identified in the narratives of the mentors and the mentees in Chapter Four. Some examples of mentor and mentee narrative are provided in the four sections outlined below to provide discernable linkages between the literature and the data of this study. However the bulk of data that verify themes and collations are located in Chapter Four to which I direct the reader. Italics are used when quoting the literature and the mentor and mentee narrative and will be indicated within the text of this chapter. This chapter is made up of five sections.

Section One discusses the themes from the interviews with the mentors.

Section Two discusses of the themes from the mentees.

Section Three presents a comparative analysis of the mentor and mentee themes.

Section Four answers the question can any one be mentor?

Section Five provides a summary of Chapter Five.

#### 5.1 Section One: Mentor interviews.

Section One will examine the themes arising from the pre and post program interviews with the mentors, as identified in Chapter Four.

Pre-program themes were:

- 1) Role of the mentor.
- 2) Professional skills.
- 3) Young people as agency.
- 4) Context of mentoring.
- 5) Adolescent developmental issues.
- 6) Gender/culture.
- 7) Intuition and ineffable experiences.

Post-program themes were:

- 1) Role of the mentor
- 2) Professional knowledge and skills.
- 3) Young people as agency.
- 4) Contexts of mentoring.
- 5) Adolescent developmental issues.
- 6) Gender /culture.
- 7) Inter subjectivity, ineffability and fortuitous encounters



The above themes as identified in the pre and post interviews will be examined using the following headings:

- 1) The mentoring process.
- 2) Professional knowledge and interpersonal skills.
- 3) Personal agency of young people.
- 4) Ecology/context.
- 5) Cultural, gender and developmental issues (Themes 5 & 6 combined).
- 6) Ineffability, intuition and fortuitous encounters.

The flavour of all four interviews was one of a deeply felt commitment to working with young people either as Youth Workers, mentors or *just me* and it was clear that the mentoring experience was a rewarding one to both mentor and mentee. Mentor 2 stated outright that mentoring *brought another dimension to how I looked and how I had to work and what I was actually offering. It became a broader – I'll just have to think of that carefully...yes, I think the expanded role was good for me as well as for the people I was working with.*

Features that stood out during the interviewing of these two mentors, as it had for MacCallum & Beltman (1999), were a sense of *commitment, enthusiasm* and *passion*. This was evident in the initial interviews and seemed to stand out even more so in the final interviews. It could be claimed that enthusiasm might be a feature of Youth Workers in general. However, as Mentor 2 stated in the second interview the process of working in the role of mentor on top of that as Youth Worker was *hugely rewarding*. Both mentors indicated that they got a lot out of the process and one mentor said he was a better worker in general because of the experience. These experiences are in line with MacCallum & Beltman (1999) who referred to the reciprocal nature of the mentoring relationship. Tobin (2004) claims that

*Mentoring is a two-way street, with mentors needing fellows as much as the latter need a mentor. As with all teaching, mentors learn more from pupils than they teach them. A researcher gets more done by involving bright young people on projects than working as a lone wolf*(p. 6).

## **Theme 1. The mentoring process.**

McDonald (2002:44) suggests that a salient feature of effective mentoring is commitment. What is required for that commitment is a clear understanding of the role of the mentor as well as a belief in the potential of the mentee and sufficient time to spend with that mentee. Others have suggested that one difficulty in studying mentoring is that it is a complex process compounded by issues such as how mentors see their role and how adolescents relate to their mentor (Beier et al., 2000). Indeed Mentor 1 said about the role of mentoring that *I think it all comes under one big – in one big group – and you just – it's like rolling up pastry – just. I can't answer that, that's really difficult.*

In the pre program interviews both mentors were able to talk about mentoring from a perspective of either having seen mentor programs in action and working in tandem with mentors or having heard or read about mentoring. Both mentors identified elements of mentoring as described in the literature such as role modelling, counselling, tutoring, coaching, sponsorship and friendship (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). In a review of mentoring programs, it Beier et al. (2000) noted that

*some mentors considered that their primary goal was to develop a relationship with the youth, others to introduce options, or to help youth to achieve character development, and others felt that their role was to help develop competence (p. 8).*

The voices of both of the mentors in this study corresponded with Beier et al.'s descriptions in their interviews. This came out stronger in the post program interviews. Interestingly, while the experience of mentoring was difficult to define or describe elements of mentoring were easily identified in the dialogue of the two mentors. Indeed the literature frequently refers to these elements when defining mentoring. Brad (2002) declares that, in the role of the mentor, *the whole is clearly more than the sum of its parts (p.88).*

Struchen and Porta (1997) state that it is not exactly clear what mentoring is and Jacobi (cited in MacCallum & Beltman, 1999) argues that the definitional diversity of mentoring continues to *plague* mentoring research. Jacobi maintains that the definitions ascribe different sets of functions or roles to mentors and characterise the mentor-protégé relationship in different ways and has identified fifteen functions or

roles that have been ascribed to mentors including acceptance, socialisation, challenge, protection, advocacy, coaching, and instruction and to stimulate acquisition of knowledge. In Jacobi's view these functions reflect three central components of the mentoring relationship; (a) emotional and social support, (b) direct assistance with career and professional development, and (c) role modelling.

After having experienced specialised training for mentoring adolescents in groups and having experienced several, intense six and twelve-week programs working with at risk young people Mentor 1 felt less sure about what mentoring was. This mentor simply felt that she was just being herself, whether that is as a Youth Worker, mentor or whatever and said *When I was there I wasn't actually thinking about what role I was – I wasn't conscious of what role I was there as, other than my job, but it just came because I had done three years of work with kids.*

The literature identifies the personal relationship between mentor and protégé as critical to the mentoring process. *Mentoring relationships are personal in that they require direct interactions between the mentor and the mentee* MacCallum and Beltman (1999). Pascarella (1998) similarly views the interpersonal relationship between the mentor and mentee as crucial. Brad (2002) describes mentoring as incorporating 'distinctive, personal' relationships. On the other hand, Mentor 2 felt more comfortable in defining the mentor role the more he continued working in that role and he said *I suppose it is about where that whole thing between role model, youth worker and mentor blend, and that, for me, was probably the greatest thing I got out of it was, I feel, a much better worker – not just with young people – but with people in general, having honed skills myself.* This speaks to the complexity of the mentoring process referred to in the literature (Beier et al., 2000; Wang & Paine, 2001). Definitions of mentoring are in abundance, however, the experience of mentoring is complex and difficult to describe. Mentor 1 stated that *I don't think mentoring is something you can write 'this is what mentoring is'. You might be able to – you might have a theory behind it and the model, but personally I can't see it.*

Regardless of the functions of the mentor as identified in the literature and in the experience of these mentors there seemed to be some ambiguity expressed by both mentors about who could be a mentor. Mentor 2 felt *that anybody can be a mentor* and Mentor 1 felt that she was just herself in these programs. These sentiments are in

line with MacCallum and Beltman (1999) who point out that a mentor could be anyone with the patience, time and energy to empathise with their protégé. MacCallum and Beltman also claim that in all nine mentor programs that they studied a common theme was that where an older, more experienced person guided and helped a younger person mentoring was more successful. Dondero (1997) suggests that

*Today, a mentor is any caring, mature person who forms a one-on-one relationship with someone in need. A mentor is defined as one who listens to, cares for, gives advice to, and shares information and life/career experiences with another, especially a young person requiring assistance (p. 882).*

At any one point the mentors were a Youth Worker, mentor, role model or just themselves. This process is borne out in much of the literature where mentoring seems to be viewed as a hybrid between a professional and an informal friend role enacted in multi-dimensional tasks such as modelling, facilitating, advising, tutoring, and friendship (Brad, 2002) (refer to Section 5.4 for further elaboration on the question of who can be a mentor).

Mentoring bought *another dimension* to Mentor 2's life and broadened his perspective on his work and made him a better worker all round, it made him a better person. In fact, both mentors spoke about gaining a lot out of the experience of mentoring. Their experience was supported in other studies where mentoring relationships were described as being reciprocal relationships (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Yancey, 1998). Tobin (2004) referred to the reciprocity of the mentoring relationship where the mentor can often learn more from the mentoring relationship than the other way around. In a mentoring situation between a more experienced adult and a younger person this makes sense, where the adult may have a broader range of terms of reference than a younger person with regards to personal growth.

The literature on inter-subjectivity supports the notion of reciprocity where inter-subjectivity has been referred to as *a shared construction of knowledge and understanding* (Stremmel & Fu, 1993 p. 342). Bandura (1986) put forward the

theoretical construct of triadic reciprocity of interaction as a model of reciprocal determinism of behaviour. In this construct, there is a mutual action of influence between personal factors such as behaviour and cognitive processes and environmental influences. Both of the socio-cultural and social learning conceptualisations of reciprocity could be viewed as contributing to the understanding of mentoring relationships. In this way, mentoring can be viewed as dynamic, reciprocal and interactive.

### ***Role modelling and identification.***

Role modelling was viewed as a function of the mentoring process. In the pre program interviews positive role modelling was seen as the same thing as mentoring, as a means or tool for establishing a bond of trust between mentor and protégé, as distinct but overlapping roles and showing children how to behave. Mentor 1, in the initial interview, felt that *I don't know the definition of mentoring and how it differs to role modelling. I would say that they are both the same thing. I don't know how I will feel at the end of this, but for now I don't know.* Similarly, in the post program interviews, young people were viewed as modelling the mentor. It was difficult for the mentors to delineate the difference between a role modelling function and the mentoring process although one mentor felt that role modelling as an independent function could precede and be conducive to the mentoring relationship in a to and fro manner. For this mentor mentoring occurred after the mentees accepted him and trusted him as a possible role model. Mentor 2 suggested that *you have to establish trust and through positive role modelling then they get to know a bit about us and we get to know a bit about them and then we can identify areas where perhaps they could possibly need help.* Tobin (2004) suggests that protégés first identify with the mentor they then emulate them and that protégés learn new values by observing them being enacted by mentors.

Possibly the most common or most frequently cited component of mentoring in mentoring literature is that of a role model (Beier et al, 2000; Dansky, 1996; Dondero, 1997; Evans & Ave, 2000; Goodlad, 1979; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Tobin, 2004). Role modelling is viewed as one of the primary constructs of social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) and many studies cite social learning as one explanatory construct of how mentoring happens (Dansky, 1996; Dondero, 1997;

Evans & Ave, 2000). In psychoanalytic theory the mechanism through which role modelling operates is referred to as identification. In social learning theory the process is one of observational or imitational learning. Both processes assume an emotional bond between the role model and protégé (Evans & Ave, 2000) but definitional clarity around both constructs remains elusive (Bandura, 1986).

Bandura (1986) refers specifically to the construct of modelling as opposed to role modelling per se and suggests that there has been much contention between the proponents of the constructs of identification and imitation as explanations of how modelling might work. Bandura (1986) suggests that

*Not only has there been little consensus of how imitation should be distinguished from identification, but some theorists assume that imitation produces identification, while others contend, with equally strong conviction that identification produces imitation (p. 48).*

One way of thinking about the difference is that imitation occurs in the presence of the model while identification can occur in the model's absence (Bandura, 1986). The other difference between these two constructs is that the protégé assimilates characteristics of the mentor or inspiring model. In role modelling the protégé imitates the model (Evans & Ave, 2000).

Mentor 1, in the post program interview, spoke about a process that could be interpreted as identification. This comment seemed to be somewhat of a conjecture by this mentor or perhaps intuitive and she referred to her comment as perhaps a bit *idealistic*. She spoke about the notion that if a young person had seen the mentor as having also, like them, gone through a *pretty crappy childhood* and having come out the other end OK, then that *might inspire a bit of hope*.

Whatever the case, both mentors felt that young people will view the mentor as a role model or as someone to look up to and certainly respect and trust *Kids will model you, and don't change your boundaries* (Mentor 1). The assumption is that, through the bridge of trust, new and positive behaviours are adopted by protégés. Both mentors felt convinced that their protégés did take on new, positive behaviours. These views were seemingly corroborated by the views of the mentees (refer to Section 5.2 on mentee Themes).

Tobin (2004) points out that the functions of role model and mentor are often confused and that many people who act as role models do not identify themselves as mentors. Tobin cites the example of Michael Jordan as role model for thousands yet available as a mentor to only a privileged few. Aagaard and Hauer (2003) state that a mentor should not only be a role model or advisor but that a mentor role is greater than that of a role model. Others suggest that role modelling in itself is a powerful force in enhancing the learning process for medical students and graduates (Elzubeir & Rizk, 2001).

There is general consensus in the literature that mentoring is different from that of being a role model. That is, a mentor can be both a role model and a mentor however, a role model may not always be capable of being a mentor. Mentor 2 felt that he adopted a role model, Youth Worker and mentor *blend*. This mentor also stated that the function of a Youth Worker preceded the function of role model that in turn preceded the full function of mentor. There seemed to be a progression or series of stages from youth work to role model to mentor and, at any one point, this mentor seemed to identify one function then the other and back and forth between functions in a flexible manner.

### ***Mentoring models.***

The literature has identified and analysed various models of *stages* of mentoring (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Pascarelli, 1998; Wang & Pain, 2001). Pascarelli identified a four stage model of classical mentoring through which the protégé grows from a state of dependence through a series of experiences that enhance specific skills, attitudes or habits, and moves finally towards responsibility and independence. These stages consist of initiation, cultivation, transformation and separation. Wang and Pain (2001), in their study, describe how mentoring was implemented in a variety of ways at different times within a zone of proximal development (zpd). The mentor identifies where the mentee is in the zpd (as discussed in Section 2.2.2) and helps her work through from lesser to greater degrees of development. Mentor 2 described a stage like, or evolving, process of mentoring *I think mentoring comes after they accept you. They accepted me and trusted me. Until that time there was role playing, positive role modelling* (Mentor 2). However there also seemed to be forwards and backwards movement in these stages *It is difficult to separate where role modelling*

*goes into mentorship in stages because, looking back, I can see how I occupied both camps, with a foot in each, and dangling in between – and moving back and forwards and retaining that flexibility as was needed ( Mentor 2).*

On the other hand, in order for the adult to act as a mentor or role model that adult must be acknowledged by the young person (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Beier et al. (2000) describe the process of choosing a role model as a function of adolescent development and this appeared to happen between some mentees and mentors in this study. This is discussed at greater length in this section under Theme 3, *Personal agency of young people*.

## **Theme 2. Professional knowledge and interpersonal skills.**

The mentors viewed possessing professional and interpersonal skills as essential in working as mentors with the group of youth involved in this study. However, both mentors felt that not all adults could do this, emphasising that professional skills were critical. This is supported by McDonald (2000) who asserts, for example, that in the drug and alcohol field it is critical for mentors to possess a range of skills such as teaching skills, interpersonal skills, management skills, technical competence and knowledge of the field. MacCallum and Beltman (1999) suggest that mentors require skills in being non-judgemental and having good listening skills. Both mentors perceived that skills such as listening, boundary keeping, confidentiality being able to validate young people, being non-judgemental, having worked through personal issues, planning and being able to identify young people's needs were important in their experience of mentoring adolescents considered at risk.

Despite the allusions by both mentors that anyone can be a mentor and just being one self is sufficient they also emphasised that possessing professional and interpersonal skills were important. Mentor 1, for example asserted that *I don't think just anyone could do it. I think that a lot of people have the right intentions. I think people with the right intentions need training. I think anyone can do it as long as they get some experience behind them before they try and be a mentor* The issue of skills requirement arose in both the pre and post program interviews, although it was elaborated on much more in the post program interviews. The feelings of these mentors are corroborated in the literature. Specific training in learning principles, the



learning process and how to establish learning goals was identified as being important for mentors (McDonald, 2002). MacCallum and Beltman (1999) suggest that mentors working with young people also need training in understanding children or adolescents, school culture and procedures, and issues concerning the particular student group or activities to be undertaken.

Both the mentors had received training in youth work prior to being employed for the mentoring programs that might explain their commitment to professional skills prior to running the programs. Before facilitating the bulk of the mentor programs both the mentors also received training on how to facilitate groups, learning principles and interpersonal dynamics. Having such training may well have enhanced the mentoring experience for both these mentors and the mentees. This is supported in some studies where McDonald (2002) suggests that without training there may be confusion, lack of confidence and dysfunctional relationships between mentor and mentee.

Both mentors perceived their training as Youth Workers as essential in working with adolescents, particularly with at risk adolescent and as important to their role as mentors. Mentor 1 was emphatic that *If you are talking particularly about mentoring young people, I would really make sure that the person had appropriate youth work skills*. This was only partially supported by the literature. MacCallum and Beltman (1999) do suggest that mentors working with young people require skilling up in understanding adolescents, although youth work skills, per se, were not identified as essential.

Mentors may also be seniors and retired people, parents, as well as tertiary trained people with the specific expertise. Senior citizens as well as older peers were identified as good sources of mentors. In fact, the two successful mentoring programs that worked with at risk adolescents, out of nine programs analysed, utilised parents, retired people and seniors (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Philip and Hendry (1996) in their typology of five different styles of mentoring youth cite friend to friend, one to one with an older experienced adult, peer group, individual – team and long term with risk taking adults as mentoring styles that worked well with adolescents.

Grandparents are identified as competent mentors in a surrogate parent style mentoring (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999) and parents are cited as potentially being

good mentors with young people (Beier et al., 2000). Elderly mentors from less advantaged backgrounds were viewed as especially effective in working with at risk youth. Reasons for this included greater ability to form friendships with youth because of patience and empathy and eagerness to share their accumulated knowledge and experience (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Tobin (2004) suggests that mentors older than their protégés by at least twenty years have usually have had time to shed their more dysfunctional qualities such as envies, animosities and petty vanities. Interestingly, the mentors in the current study put getting rid of their *own crap* high on the list of skills in working with younger people.

Despite the emphasis on professional skills Mentor 1 provided an example of facilitating play and spontaneity as a part of her own and the other mentor's repertoire in working with young people. Having fun and the ability to make friends with the mentee is also reported in the literature as an important feature of successful mentoring (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999).

Other qualities specific to mentoring over and above professional skills and also interpersonal skills are identified in many studies. A range of qualities such as respect, empathy, flexibility and openness, showing interest and enthusiasm, focus and being able to share resources and experiences are identified in the literature as enhancing the mentoring relationship (Bein, 1999; Brad, 2002; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; McDonald, 2002). These might be considered personal qualities that the mentor may, or may not, come equipped with. Both mentors identified such qualities as being important in their relationships with the mentees. Mentor 2 indicated that *Without exception everybody that we worked with stated that they enjoyed having us because we listened and treated them with respect and didn't pull them down.*

Trust was another such quality identified by the mentors and was supported in the literature as setting an inviting space for mentoring to occur. This quality, whilst mentioned in the pre program interviews, was emphasised more often in the post program interviews and became a sub-theme in the findings from the latter.

### ***Trust.***

The two mentors acknowledged that trust and cultivating trust with young people was critical to the success of young people acquiring new skills or learning. That is, if a young person was not prepared to receive and accept learning from the other, then learning in that particular inter-subjective space probably was not going to occur. The mentor had to be accepted and had to more or less earn the trust of the young person. Mentor 2 stated that *I think mentoring comes after they accept you. They accepted me and trusted me.* Other qualities, identified by the mentors as critical to establishing a trusting relationship, included building rapport, being honest, respecting and valuing young people. Mentees also felt that it was beneficial that mentors could be trusted *we could be honest* (2.10).

The importance of trust in the mentoring relationship was also reported in several studies (MacCallum and Beltman, 1999; Pascarella, 1998). MacCallum and Beltman (1999) identified a three-stage model in developing mentoring relationships in their literature review. In that particular model stage one was developing rapport and building trust; stage two was reaching goals; and stage three was closure. MacCallum and Beltman emphasise that a crucial component in mentoring is the establishment of a trusting relationship. For Beier et al. (2000) the actual definition of a mentor is someone whom the young person can trust. McDonald (2002) views processes such as establishing trust, communicating and negotiating the relationship as important features of mentoring.

### **Theme 3. Personal agency of young people.**

The thesis discussion thus far has focussed on the mentoring relationship and the professional and interpersonal skills of the mentor. Despite the importance of adults in setting up mentoring programs and initiating mentoring relationships, MacCallum & Beltman, 1999 suggest that the young person must acknowledge the adult as a role model or mentor. Beier et al. (2000) similarly suggest that it is a natural part of adolescent development to choose role models. Nurmi (1997) asserts that while environmental factors play an important role in adolescent's wellbeing and development, young people also construct their own future based on their own goals. Nurmi postulates that adolescents go through a process of self-definition that is based on processes such as setting personal goals, planning for achievement of these and evaluating the outcome. Adolescents construct self-schema and attitudes about self

through this process of self-definition. Mentor 2 affirmed the foregoing with the observation that *there were good indicators to us to what they had taken on board and what they hadn't. What they had actually gone away and discussed amongst themselves and come back and presented to us – and thought about – was pretty huge*

Bandura (1986) suggests that people interact with each other in a reciprocally deterministic way. That is, the environment, human or otherwise, has specific effects on the individual. Never the less, the individual brings to each situation their own thoughts, behaviours and motivations. A key concept here is that young people have self-efficacy or agency in the mentoring relationship. The mentors in this study, in both the pre and post program interviews, suggest that their protégés exhibited reward-driven behaviour, were arbiters of their own learning and tested and evaluated their new learning. These processes are considered basic tenets of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977).

Both mentors indicated that unless young people, either as a part of a group or individually, showed interest in activities or had some form of ownership of the process they would cause havoc or simply not support the process of the group. Mentor 1 felt that *groups become self-monitoring, so if you go in there 'I know everything and you are never going to know anything about me', they'll give you a hard time* Participants would also choose their own agenda for what the group did and how the group did it. There was congruency between the pre and post program data that could probably be accounted for by the professional training of both mentors as Youth Workers. The post program interview, however, provided examples specific to the process of mentoring. Young people accessed and adopted the person as a mentor after the mentor had gained their trust through their function as a role model.

Philip and Hendry (1996) support this experience stating that young people actively seek out and negotiate mentoring relationships and map out conditions for appropriate support in a variety of ways. Some participants in these programs sought to determine the expected outcomes of the program and some wanted to be in one mentors group and others in the other mentor's group. One young person felt he could not access the mentor from within the group because there was too much

talking. Some young people from outside of the mentoring programs sought out peer mentees from within the group as possible mentors. A similar process was reported in Dansky (1996) who stated that newcomers to groups seek out established participants as role models

#### **Theme 4. Ecology/context.**

Ecology or context of mentoring was a theme that came up in different ways in the pre and post program interviews. In the pre program interviews issues centred primarily on group issues and dynamics. In the final interview this theme came up under two sub-themes: i) the group dynamics and, ii) the setting of the program.

It is possible that, as the mentors experienced more and varied school settings, they were more able to experience more clearly the impact of those settings on their relationships with the mentees. These interviewees also highlighted broader ecological impacts such as home environments, backgrounds and transport.

##### ***Group issues and dynamics.***

Issues that were salient in the pre program interview included, safety of the group, using the group to the mentor's advantage, group sizes and numbers, different sub groups within each group, group cohesion and group dynamics. Issues around group work were similar in both pre and post program interviews. However, the issue of the length of the programs became salient in the post program interview and that might have been due to the mentor's experiences with several groups. Mentor 1 experienced this as *In this program you have to be a lot more spontaneous because you only have two hours in that environment and sometimes kids will ask you questions that you do not know the answers to, but you have to figure out what it is they really want to know.*

One mentor felt that youth participants felt safety in the groups that smoothed the way for less mainstream problems of participants, such as drug use, to emerge. The issue of group safety was also identified in a study that suggested well managed groups do create safety for adolescents in therapeutic group settings Senay (2000).

Another study similarly found that in the group-leader style of mentoring, individual participants felt empowered to talk to mentors after the group about an issue that had been raised. In some cases issues may have been discussed when the mentor was not present and other times in the presence of the mentor and group (Philip and Hendry, 1996). Dansky (1996) suggested that what was important in group settings was not so much content but psycho-social support and networking within the group and that group dynamics take on mentoring qualities.

Group dynamics such as disruption of the group, sub groups within the main groups and friendships between participants were issues that were articulated by the mentors. Some of these issues were identified in the literature. For example, the make up of the group and group dynamics can contribute to or negate discussion around certain issues (Genay, 2000). Group dynamics such as polarisation, conformity, communication flows, group cohesiveness, instilling of hope and socialisation techniques have powerful influences on group members (Dansky, 1996; Struchen & Porta, 1997; Yancey, 1998). Mentor 1 relates that *If you have only got three kids who are trying to stir things up, but you've got three who actually want to learn something, these three I found tend to wind down a bit, being loud and boisterous isn't so funny anymore because they haven't got the other three to keep it going*

The length of the program was seen as an issue. A six-week program was seen as too restrictive in terms of developing relationships with young people. The length of group sessions was also seen as too concentrated in that the mentors had to get to know their protégés in a short period of time. These experiences were supported by Beier et al. (2000) who stated that several months might be an insufficient period for bonding, trust, and connective-ness to occur between mentors and mentees.

### ***Setting.***

The context in which the programs were facilitated was primarily a school setting. Both mentors, after having intensively worked with groups in a number of varied school settings, experienced more and less mentoring-friendly cultures within those schools. Both mentors articulated that schools had their own cultures and that it was important to enlist the support of those cultures through the teachers, health staff and

students if the mentor program was to work well *I think there is a need for having a social sense of a mentor program that can be built into every aspect of, say, a high school situation, secondary school situation. That would involve – that would have to involve teaching staff and admin support* (Mentor 2) and Mentor 1 stated *I think that once you talk to individual teachers the environment changes because teachers get it and will ask questions about it.*

Different schools have different cultures and it is crucial that those cultures are supportive of mentoring programs if the program is to be effective (Guetzloe, 1997; MacCallum and Beltman, 1999; Wassef et al., 1998). Examples of relationship issues with schools such as lack of interest, little support, feedback or contact with others involved were cited in MacCallum and Beltman, (1999) and were very similar to examples given by the two mentors in this study. MacCallum and Beltman also suggest that mentors are more confident when they can easily access school staff as that would provide opportunities for expressing concerns, asking questions or providing feedback to staff. This was *certainly* the case with the mentors in this study.

### ***Broader ecological impacts.***

Other issues to do with ecology were anecdotal or common sense, if not self-evident. Such comments centred upon issues of young peoples' home environments or backgrounds and areas that they live in when not at school. For example it would seem self evident that the self-esteem of individuals would probably be greater in individuals from supportive environments.

The mentors' experience of ecology as impacting on learning is fundamentally supported by socio-cultural theory and ecology theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Foreman, et al., 1993). These theoretical domains are identified in the literature as explanatory of how mentoring occurs. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), there exist micro, meso and macro levels of impact on human development. Having identified micro levels of impact on mentoring such as group dynamics and macro levels of impact such as setting of the program, one mentor identified at least one meso level impact, that of transport. Common sense would dictate that those young people having transport to positive after school activities, such as sport or other

interests, might stand to experience positive benefits in many ways as contrasted to those who did not.

Therefore, regardless of young people's agency and good mentor skills, if an environment that is conducive to a positive learning experience does not exist, learning may become impeded. The context of the mentoring process was viewed by the mentors as multi-layered for example when teachers *find out definitely what it is and what it isn't that you are trying to achieve. So that sets up a completely different environment for the program to run too. Because you have teachers supporting you and saying – I've really noticed that this kid has changed* (Mentor 1). The most immediate contextual layer was the group setting itself that was set in the next layer of the school where Mentor 1 states *So you took them out of the environment they were in, and you also took them out of the social environment they were in and it was like working with a different bunch of kids - amazing*. The home and outside of school environment was layered over that.

## **Theme 5. Cultural, gender and developmental issues.**

### ***Culture and gender.***

Both mentors considered personal characteristics rather than the culture or gender of mentors and mentees as significant to the mentoring relationship. A sense of ambiguity in the pre and post program interviews was salient around this issue. On the one hand, a hypothetical scenario of a tribal setting was given as an example where it would be difficult to imagine a White man mentoring Female aboriginal women. In another example of an urban or regional setting, the actual identity that an individual takes on was considered important. For example, non-Aboriginal people raised in an Aboriginal family might consider themselves more Aboriginal and vice versa for an Aboriginal person who may have been raised in a non-Aboriginal family.

Mentor 1 who, in the post program interview provided examples where one mixed gender group needed to be separated because of sexual tension or sexual issues raised the issue of gender specific mentoring. In the pre program interview an example was given of female interest areas versus male interest areas. That is, the girls wanted to talk about certain things but not in the presence of the boys *The picture that I got was*



*that the group that [M.2] had, the girls really wanted to talk about girls stuff and the guys did not want to (Mentor 1).*

Disruption, in particular by male students, were highlighted by both mentors, a finding that was supported by Tater (1998) who indicated that, among other behaviours, boys were distinguished by behaviours such as bullying, rudeness and being talkative in teacher pupil relations. Tater's findings were confirmed in this study's findings where Mentor 1 said she was *looking at engaging these girls with where they were at because they had some really important issues, but you can't do that and keep these guys interested when all they want to do is run amok – so the girls wanted to talk, the guys wanted to play games.*

The literature is equivocal about several issues to do with mentoring including the degree of supervision, the ideal age difference between mentor and mentee, the level of intimacy and intensity of the relationship, gender or ethnic similarity and long and short term mentoring. Some studies stress the need for specific mentor to mentee matching for reasons such as marginalised ethnicity of mentees or for cultural empowerment of mentees (Evans & Ave, 2000; Yancey, 1998). Research has shown that young people will identify with models that are like themselves in some way be it along gender lines, cultural group, age or experience (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Evidence on the importance of mentor to mentee matching is not clear and coping or expert mentors are viewed as appropriate mentor styles for working with adolescents (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Other research contends that mentors and mentees do not necessarily need to be specifically matched along lines of race, socio-economic status or any other variable, albeit these issues should be acknowledged (Struchen & Porta, 1997). Mentor 1 in this study changed her views about the need for same sex mentoring towards the end of the programs *Now in hindsight I would say personality comes into it a lot.*

MacCallum and Beltman (1999) indicate that issues of gender, ethnicity, culture and socio-economic status should be taken into account in mentor matching processes and felt, for example, that because a greater proportion of at risk youth are boys that there is a greater need for male mentors. However, the appropriateness of one to one,

cross gender matching needs to be considered as issues around this type of matching, in the business world at least, have been identified (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999).

For the mentors in this study honesty, listening, and self-awareness were qualities that were conducive to developing relationships with young people. After having experienced working with two mentors throughout the twelve month project period, mentor 1 became convinced that personality had a lot to do with effective mentoring relationships where for example Mentor 1 said *I think I just dealt with it as [just me] I don't think any of my youth work skills came into it. I think I was dealing with it solely on a personal basis.*

These sentiments and experiences of the mentors found resonance in the literature. Numerous studies, cited throughout this research, made no mention at all of culture, race or gender although mentioned in a precursory sense the need for appropriate mentor to mentee matching along those lines. These studies focus, instead upon interpersonal characteristics of interaction such as being non-judgemental, being a friend, being supportive, caring and other qualities attributed to effective mentors (Barton-Arwood, Jolivet & Massey, 2000; Bein, 1999; Eva & Hauer, 2003; Guetzloe, 1997; Wang & Paine, 2001).

Mentors do need to take race and culture into consideration. However, successful outcomes have been found regardless of background or race matching (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Mentors need to genuinely like their protégés and display empathy and non-judgemental attitudes rather than necessarily be of the same race or culture per se as effective psychosocial support can overcome many racial or cultural barriers (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Struchen & Porta, 1997). Both mentors in this study confirmed the outcomes identified in the literature and displayed effective interpersonal and professional tracking qualities that helped them to determine, for example, when breaking up groups into sub groups based on gender was needed and when it was not.

### ***Adolescent development issues.***

Developmental psychology suggests that all adolescents go through various developmental milestones such as puberty and sexual exploration. Adolescents

possess perennial needs such as the need for friends, the need to experiment, and the need for identity formation (Guetzloe, 1997; Peterson, 1989; Trickett, 1997). Gutzeloe (1997) contends that an essential, perennial and universal need for adolescents is that for a dependable, consistent and positive relationship with at least one other adult. Others suggest that testing the limits is a norm for adolescents (Beier et al., 2000). Mentoring is viewed as one way of supporting adolescents as they engage the transition into adulthood (Philip & Hendry, 1996).

Both mentors were trained Youth Workers and had worked almost exclusively with at risk adolescents. Both were emphatic that mentors working with this cohort would need youth work skills. However, working individually with each adolescent was more important than the fact that they were adolescents or at risk. The mentors loved working with young people generally and this was expressed in the way that they talked about their protégés. *You have to be able to identify issues that are important for young people not issues that you think are important. Your own theories that you think are important, they shouldn't be overlooked, but they are important up to a point* (Mentor 2).

The benefits to mentor - mentee relationships of these processes were supported in the literature. That is, mentors need to genuinely like their protégés and that they must know the subject matter of their chosen field, in this case, adolescent developmental issues (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; McDonald, 2002).

## **Theme 6. Ineffability, intuition and fortuitous encounters.**

Regardless of the personal and environmental determinants of people's behaviours, *fortuitous encounters* will also affect the course of an individual's life (Bandura, 1986). That is, while our interactions are subject to the reciprocal influences of social and personal factors, chance can play its hand in our life path.

Others refer to chance or special encounters as the ineffable (Crotty, 1998:93) or a vital nexus (Elliot, 1992). The experience of the vital nexus seemed to be reflected in the comments of Mentor 1 who spoke about the importance of intuition in her work. For this mentor intuition was an undefinable quality that was an important part of her personal and professional repertoire, albeit, not a skill that one could necessarily

learn. *Being sensitive* to or *tuning in* to situations as described by both mentors, hardly seem definable skills as such. These comments arose in the pre program interviews and were validated in the post program interviews.

*Allowing young people to work through things at their own pace; you just know; chance; or spontaneous* moments were some descriptors used in the dialogue of the mentors in their encounters or relationships with their protégés. These descriptors might be used in almost any interactive encounter and not necessarily be unique to the mentoring situation, never the less it is worthwhile noting that it was a salient theme for the mentors in this study. Evans and Ave (2000) outlined factors such as some young people being better able to form a relationship with a mentor than others, or mentors adopting counter productive attitudes towards some mentees. What works for some young people does not necessarily work for others (Struchen & Porta, 1997). These issues might explain why some chanced moments seemed to work better than other moments. Further research is required on the issue of the special conditions of mentoring and Royse (1998) declares that more studies should be carried out on the quality of the mentor – mentee relationship.

Regardless of professionalism, preparedness, or ecology *vis a vis* the mentoring space the vital nexus was a salient experience for both mentors. Mentor 1, who referred to intuition, felt that it was something that could not be learnt. The special-ness of the mentoring relationship is referred to in numerous studies. For example Beier et al. (2000) refer to a connective-ness with a trusted adult that can facilitate positive growth in an adolescent. Furey (cited in McDonald, 2002) suggests there is a ‘magic’ of informal mentoring.

Mentors are viewed as *beacons of hope* (Dondero, 1997) and can *reach the unreachable* (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Mentoring is seen as a unique and distinctive, personal relationship (Brad, 2002). However, Tobin (2004) suggests that these types of views hail back to a past of moralistic fervour that extols a kind of virtues ideology. On the other hand, there needs to be a greater emphasis on professionalism of mentoring programs (Bein et al., 1999). The very concept of mentoring youth seems appealing and intuitive regardless of proof of efficacy (Beier et al., 2000).

Perhaps there is something special about the mentoring relationship that even researchers intuit. Professionals, grandparents, parents, community members and even ex convicts can become mentors with up skilling. As Elliot (1992) puts it

*it is because of the existence of certain trans-historical needs – such as infantile helplessness, the need for warmth, and nourishment, separation and individuation, attachment and so on – that a vital nexus arises between the material interests of human beings and the creative space in which unconscious desire and symbolisation unfolds (p. 271).*

In summary, the narrative of the mentors was schematised into several themes including the mentoring process, professional knowledge and interpersonal skills, personal agency of young people, ecology/context, cultural, gender and developmental issues and ineffability, intuition and fortuitous encounters. The differentiation of themes suggests that the process of mentoring is complex and multi-layered. For the mentors each question opened one new set of thoughts after another and led to a rich and diversified narrative that spoke about the complexities of human relationship between adolescents and adults in the specific context of a school system. A number of variables impacted on that relationship in a multifaceted way.

The next section will examine the narrative of the mentees.

## **5.2 Section Two: Mentee Feedback.**

This section will examine the mentees narrative of their experience of mentoring. What happened to the adolescent participants who were involved in the process of mentoring was contextual, immediately relevant and meaningful to their lives. These young people had been considered as at risk of developmental or, at least, academic failure and, therefore, their needs may have been quite different from other young people who may have been considered perhaps more resilient.

The narrative of the mentees appeared to centre upon three themes.

- a. The mentor – mentee relationship.

- b. Immediate relationships – particularly with teachers.
- c. The shifts and experiences of the mentees.

Overall, the flavour, or feel, derived from these young people's narratives was very positive about the mentors and the mentoring experience and that somehow some things changed for many of them or made a difference for the better. Key words or concepts that came through in the discussion time and again included openness, non-judgemental, different ways, awareness and change.

The response to the question 'How do you think the program worked for you' can be summarised in one articulate, written response;

*It was good because we could talk openly and express our opinions without anyone judging us. They showed us different ways to handle different situations, made us aware of our rights. And talked to us about drugs, but it was good because they weren't pounding into us not to do it, they made us aware of the consequences and dangers, it made me think about it more. I didn't think I would change what I was doing at the time but in the end now I think about it I have changed (1.10).*

This response appeared to capture the process as experienced by many of these young people and speaks to the three themes as listed below.

### **Theme (A). The mentor – mentee relationship**

The mentees perceived the mentors as older friends; they listened to students, *were respectful; non-judgemental; and caring; were wiser; and see us as another person.* Trust was implied by many of these descriptors and was viewed as important to the mentees as it was to the mentors. The qualities that these mentees saw in the mentors closely were also identified in the literature. Excellent mentors have the qualities of being kind, healthy and competent, empathic, patient and flexible (Brad, 2002). Hamburg (1997) states that if professionals can respond in meaningful ways to young people's concerns, interests and perceptions their help will have enduring value. In

group mentoring young people may look to individual mentors for support, advice and challenge (Phillips & Hendry, 1996).

Many of the mentees in the focus groups described the mentors as *being like us; as having had similar experiences as us; understood what we were going through; as having been there; and they relate to us*. These comments are suggestive of the concepts referred to in the literature as identity formation or self definition (Nurmi, 1997). The psychoanalytic construct of identification is an important explanatory construct for how learning might happen. Waterman (1982) states that *the greater the availability of model figures perceived as living successfully, the greater the probability will be that a person will form meaningful commitments* (p. 345). Waterman suggests that this process occurs through identity choices that will lead to positive adolescent identity formation. According to MacCallum and Beltman (1999) *Research has shown that young people identify more closely with models like themselves in a number of ways* (p. 1).

The sense that the mentors were *like us* as stated by the mentees suggests a special relationship or connection between mentor and mentee. Similarly, mentors felt a connectedness to their protégés. This is corroborated in the literature (Beier et al., 2000; Brad, 2002). This type of connectedness finds a conceptual explanation in the construct referred to as inter-subjectivity where there is a meaningful and mutual construction of knowledge and understanding between the mentor and mentee (Stremmel & Fu, 1993). Modelled behaviour may be more observable and identifiable and therefore more easily measured. Identification, on the other hand, seems to be a more subjective experience and therefore more elusive to comment upon by either the participant or the observer. There appear to be theoretical tensions around the differences between role modelling and identification (Bandura, 1986).

### **Theme (B). Immediate relationships - particularly with teachers.**

The immediacy of the issues or problems to do with school or teachers was pre-eminent in the mentee discussions and it is interesting that other, possibly negative relationships, or issues outside of the school did not feature in their responses. Benard (cited in Krovetz, 1999) emphasises that schools in general do not promote

resilience in young people. MacCallum and Beltman (1999) claim that a singular reason that at risk students end up in mentoring programs is because *they have a lack of supportive adults in their lives, and may also have poor relationships with their peers and teachers* (p. 38).

For the mentees in this study, problems at school were immediate and pressing. For some their future at the school may have been in jeopardy. Whatever the case, these participants had come to see teachers or school in a pejorative way. Mentors, on the other hand, were seen as not like teachers and the mentoring space as not like school. *It worked for me because they helped us with problems that teachers and others could not* (1.10s). Mentors were viewed as open, friendlier caring, listening and accepting. *It's different from class – the mentor program was more friendlier* (1.9) That young people are drawn to these qualities is attested to in the literature where researchers stress the importance of the need in adolescent's lives for at least one significant adult and that young people have a deep need for care, belonging and connectedness (Beier et al., 2000; Guetzloe, 1997; Pascarella, 1998).

Along side these needs, Beier et al. (2000) suggests that an important part of adolescent development is to choose a role model. It is highly likely that there might not have been much opportunity for choice or range of positive adult role models in these young people's lives, at least not at school. The mentors in this study, who demonstrated a real enthusiasm for and commitment to their protégés became, in the words of Dondero (1997), a *beacon of hope* in some ways for these mentees. Bein (1999) argues that the mentoring relationship is designed to *engender youth's hopes and beliefs in themselves* which in turn enhances their ability to socialise and cope in the world.

Years Eight and Nine at high school are, anecdotally, typically viewed as years of difficulty and change for many young people. This was the year range for all the participants in this study. For Schulenberg et al. (1997) the interaction or *developmental mismatch* alone between a developing adolescent and his or her changing context is enough for stresses and strains to occur for that adolescent.



### **Theme (C). The shifts or experiences of the mentees.**

Shifts or changes were important processes for the students and sub themes in their dialogues such as behavioural, beliefs and attitudes, perceptions and emergence were identified. Attitudes and behaviours that centred on violence, drug taking and smoking changed for many. Beliefs and attitudes about school and towards teachers also changed. Mentees said that they *totally looked at teachers differently* (1.10); *I got a different perspective of the way a teacher works* (2.10s); *it gave me a better picture about how important school is*

These findings are supported in the literature where it was found that adolescents who had been involved with a mentor undertook less risky behaviours, were less violent, used less illicit drugs than their non-mentored counter parts ((Barton-Arwood, Jolivet & Massey, 2000; Beier et al., 2000; Hamburg, 1997). Many studies cited in MacCallum and Beltman (1999) reported greater school retention and attendance when involved with a mentor. Several mentees at one school, in this study, stated that if it had not been for the mentor program they would not have stayed on for Year Eleven. Other mentees stated that their attitudes and ways of handling difficulties at school had changed for the better. Mentees stated that mentoring *changed my views towards Aborigines because I was a racist* (2.10); *let it all out, instead of bottling it up inside, if you leave it to bottle up you smash stuff* (2.10); *It helped me to stop drugs and smoking. Helped me not to be so violent* (1.10s). These findings were similarly reported by MacCallum and Beltman (1999). However, despite research indicating reported benefits, Royse (1998) asserts that few studies have actually documented such benefits and research methodologies have been questioned. Further research is needed to determine the nature of change for mentees.

Although self esteem and self worth improvements have been reported in the literature these qualities were difficult to assess in this study (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Elements of self esteem or self worth such as *confidence*; *change for the better*; and *helped me understand my life* are identified in the narratives of the mentees in this study. The theme that focused upon these statements was entitled as emergence as it was difficult to create a heading to describe some deeper level changes or shifts that took place for some participants. There appears to be a link

between deeper level change for both mentor and mentee but no real conceptual construct that might assist further understanding of such changes. One such construct as postulated in this study is inter-subjectivity.

Inter-subjectivity can be considered as a mutual or co-construction of meaning between two individuals (Stolorow et al., 1994; Stremmel & Fu, 1993; Forman et al., 1993). Inter subjectivity can also be viewed as an ineffable state of union where something passes over from ones own subjectivity to the others' subjectivity in a reciprocal manner. Some observable behaviours are modelled, viewed and taken on by the learner. Other more ineffable or unquantifiable qualities can also be incorporated, not just mimicked, and become somehow intrinsically linked to a new state of change in the protégé and mentor.

Currently there appears little research that links inter-subjectivity to the mentoring relationship although that construct is utilised in the education and peer-tutoring field to how learning happens (Forman et al., 1993). This study has found that there are grounds for continuing research that focuses specifically upon the construct of inter-subjectivity and how it might be linked to the reciprocal and dynamic relationship between mentor and mentee.

The narrative of the mentees was different from that of the mentees probably due to the developmental tasks that are necessitated by the stage of adolescents. Their narratives were compressed into three key themes including the mentor – mentee relationship, immediate relationships – particularly with teachers and the shifts and experiences of the mentees. These themes spoke of the link between the process of mentoring and the immediacy of the mentee life experience. That is, as adolescents, they were going through tasks of relationship building, identity formation and how they experienced those processes. This narrative was that of the adolescent, simplistic as that may sound.

The next section will provide a comparative analysis of the mentor and mentee narrative that was analysed above.

### **5.3 Section Three: Comparative analysis of mentor and mentee narratives.**

The aim of this section is to determine if mentors and mentees are stating similar things about the mentoring experience and thereby highlighting differences or validating similarities of those experiences.

One type of research on mentoring identified in the literature focuses upon mentors and 'how to do manuals' on what effective mentoring consists of. Another type of research alluded to in the literature focuses on the benefits for mentees. Little research has been identified that comparatively analyses both mentor and mentee narratives. The present study can be viewed as unique, in this regard, and contributes something new to the literature on mentoring.

The comparative analysis of data from the mentors and mentees rests on several assumptions of the constructivist hermeneutic paradigm. The first of these assumptions is that many constructions of knowledge or understanding are possible. A narrative can have several meanings and those meanings are assigned by the interpretive community (Gliner, Morgan & Harmon, 1991; Rodwell & Byers, 1997). The second assumption is that human constructions can never be considered as ultimately true and can be considered as problematic and ever changing (Guba, 1990). In this case the researcher has made constructions and interpretations as audible as possible by demonstrating how those interpretations have been reached.

A third assumption underlying this analysis is that research is constructed between participant and researcher. There is a co-emergence of perspectives or a fusion of horizons (Garrat & Hodkinson, 1998; Horn, 1998). Guba (1990) suggests that this participatory construction or elaboration of knowledge *must be concerned with conflict as well as consensus* (p. 79). Conflict may arise between participants in the co-constructing process and may arise between reader and researcher. The best that the researcher can do is being open and transparent in how the process of analysis was undertaken.

***Are mentors and mentees saying the same things about mentoring?***

The areas of congruity between the mentor and mentee might be summed up using four collations:

1. Mentor relationship and experiences of mentoring.
2. Personal agency of YP.
3. Ecology/context.
4. Fortuitous encounters and Inter-subjectivity.

These four collations are derived through combining themes from mentor and mentee discourse and are depicted in Figure 3.

Collation 1 is drawn from elements in mentor Themes 1 & 2 and mentee Theme A.

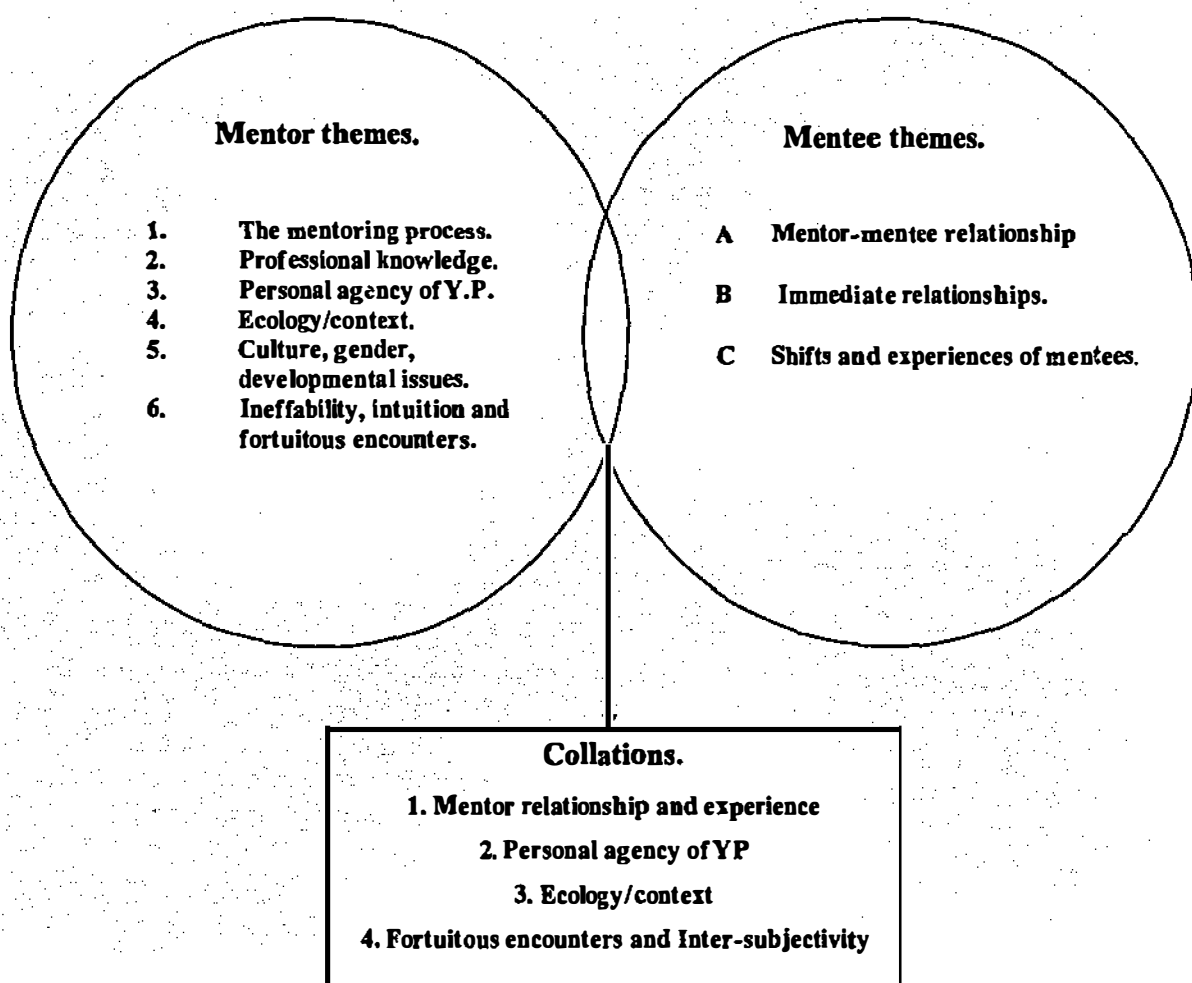
Collation 2 is drawn from elements in mentor Theme 3 and mentee Theme C.

Collation 3 is drawn from elements in mentor Themes 4 & 5 and mentee Themes B & C.

Collation 4 is drawn from elements in mentor Themes 1 & 4 and mentee Themes A & C.

**Figure 3.**

**Depiction of comparative analysis of mentor and mentee discourse.**



The collations of mentor and mentee themes as depicted in Figure Three will now be discussed.

### **Collation 1. Mentor relationship and experience.**

For Collation 1 the mentors themes of **the mentoring process** and **professional knowledge** have been combined with the mentee theme of **mentor-mentee relationship**.

The descriptors used by the mentors and mentees to describe the process of mentoring were very similar. These included being non-judgemental and feeling non-judged, respectfulness, caring, mentor as wiser or more knowledgeable, and being flexible. These interpersonal stances are well supported in the literature (Bein, 1999; Brad, 2002; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; McDonald, 2002). There are therefore, identifiable qualities that can be ascribed to the mentoring relationship. Clearly both mentors and mentees in this study described and experienced these qualities in their relationships.

The traditional roles of mentoring were described and experienced by both mentors and mentees including role model, advisor, trusted other, teacher, coach, caring other, mature person and friend. These roles are amply evidenced in the literature (Dondero, 1997; Guetzloe, 1997; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Pascarelli, 1998). The mentors saw their goals of engaging with young people similarly to Beier et al. (2000) who suggested that the role of mentors was to develop relationships, introduce options and aid in the development of competence in young people's lives. The mentees experienced friendship, having other choices and gains in the ways that they dealt with problems in their relationship with the mentors in the process of mentoring.

It is important to note that both mentors saw many of the above qualities as part of just being who they were, as individuals. Indeed Mentor 1 stated that while mentoring was the job description *just being me* was more important. Both these mentors viewed their role as Youth Worker as crucial to working with these adolescents who were considered at risk and indeed they felt it would be quite impossible to work as mentors with young people without some form of youth work

training. However, Mentor 2 was able to identify a stage when youth working became role modelling that then became mentoring in a kind of consecutive sequence where each role blended into the other. Brad (2002) stated that mentoring was greater than the sum of all its parts. The literature did not concur with the mentors sentiments regarding the imperative of youth work skills in working with at risk youth. In fact, seniors, retired people, older peers and grand parents can be effective mentors with young people albeit training on specific issues were viewed as important (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Phillips & Hendry, 1996). The key here might be that training had an important part in ensuring effective mentorship.

How both mentor and mentee experienced the mentoring process was seen as significant. Mentors felt they had changed and that they were better workers as a result of the mentoring process and that it was rewarding for them and the process was seen as being meaningful to mentees. Mentees saw their lives as becoming more meaningful for them in positive ways. Meaningful interactions with professionals are seen as making a difference in young people's lives (Hamburg, 1997). Looking at the process of mentoring in this way rather than shop listing benefits per se might add to the research in providing another framework for studying the mentoring relationship. That is, there are deeper qualities to relationship other than benefits for both mentor and mentee. These qualities are perhaps more difficult to quantify, never the less, they are evidenced and are ignored to the detriment of research in this area. This issue is further explored in **Collation 4. Fortuitous encounters and Inter-subjectivity.**

## **Collation 2. Personal Agency of young people.**

The mentor theme of **personal agency of young people** and mentee theme of **shifts and experiences of mentees** form the basis of Collation 2.

Research suggests that young people are arbiters of their own learning and construct their own paths based on the goals they set for themselves (Bandura, 1986; Nurmi, 1997).

Both mentors stated that only when their protégés were ready for a shift or change did that shift occur. The young people were active participants in groups or they were

disruptive and they could both occur on any given week. Having said that, the mentor programs probably had a greater degree of flexibility than the usual classroom setting, hence mentors were seen as less controlling than teachers and more flexible and friendly.

How much agency mentees had in their interactions was actually determined by the mentor or teacher. As Mentor 2 put it *Once we brought the relevance to their lives into it, and assured them that we were working for them, and not for our own betterment, then things were able to turn around where they would approach us about certain things* The assumption that young people are self efficacious must be clarified by stating that their choices may lead to beneficial changes for them on the proviso that an environment is conducive to them making their own choices. The interplay between ecology and self-efficacy is complex and rich (Bandura, 1986) and requires further research.

On the matter of agency of mentee the mentors did suggest that it was their role to facilitate processes conducive to growth and change for the mentees however, they felt that young people needed to want to change or to access them as mentors. The tone of the mentee narrative was that the mentoring program and the mentors *helped* them change. Typical of the comments used to describe the shifts that occurred for young people in this study were - *Mentors showed us different way; we could express our feeling; helped me to be*. That is, mentees did not perceive or acknowledge their own agency in their change process as much as the mentors did.

McDonald (2002) uses the terms *good rapport and mutual attraction* to define the informal mentoring relationship. Furthermore, it is suggested that mentoring involves *a greater degree of partnership* than education or training and that in the mentoring relationship learning *emphasises the pursuit of meaning and understanding* (McDonald, 2002). Thus the relationship between mentor and mentee is seen to be much more dynamic, flexible, interactive, mutual and deeper than in other learning situations. Partnership implies that both learner and the learned are active agents of change in a mutual exchange. The learner pursues understanding and meaning, the learned actively provides the space, knowledge and opportunity for that pursuit. A construct that helps describe this process is inter-subjectivity where learning relationships are viewed as mutual and where a shared construction of knowledge

and understanding occurs (Stremmel & Fu, 1993). This construct will be further explored in Collation 4.

Research suggests that young people will seek out mentors or role models (Dansky, 1996; Phillips & Hendry, 1996). The proviso for that to occur is that mentors or role models are made available. Bandura (1986) supports this notion suggesting a reciprocity of individual and environmental determinants of behaviour. The environment in this study included the mentors, schools and the agency that provided the programs.

### **Collation 3. Ecology/context.**

The mentor themes of **Ecology/context** and **Culture, gender, developmental issues** and the mentee themes of **Immediate relationships** and **Mentor and mentee relationships** are the basis of this collation.

The mentors professionally and intuitively understood that ecology and socio-cultural environments impact upon the mentoring space. For example Mentor 1 asserted that *I think that what made a huge difference was talking to staff at staff development day*. This was also confirmed by the young people in their statements of improvement of their immediate and presumably broader ranging relationships. For the mentees, their psycho-emotional world was affected by the context of the mentor program. They, in turn, made changes such as their drug use, violence and attitudes and behaviours towards teachers that can be understood as impacting on the ecology around them.

The literature identified socio-cultural theory, particularly the construct of zone of proximal development (zpd), as an explanation of how mentoring works (Evans & Ave, 2000; Wang & Pain, 2001). By the accounts of the mentees cognitive, perceptual and behavioural shifts occurred for them. They put these shifts down to the way that mentors interacted with them. The construct of zpd suggests that learning occurs through interaction with the more capable other who is able to recognise the actual level of development for the learner and can, through a process called scaffolding, assist the learner to reach a potential level of development (Vygotsky, 1978). Brad (2002) claims that it is the powerful emotional relationship



between mentor and mentee that supports and guides the mentee in the process of mastery of their world. The claims of the above research were supported by the data in this study.

The literature describes a broad range of mentoring styles including group mentoring (Dansky, 1996; Phillips & Hendry, 1996; Yancey, 1998). The nature of group work and group dynamics were seen as impacting on the mentoring relationship by the mentors in this study. Interestingly, the mentees describe their relationships with the mentors in terms of one to one relationships despite the group nature of the mentoring processes that dominate this study. For example *It gave me a better picture of how important school is (2.10) helping me talk to teachers the way you should (1.9s).*

There appears to be consistent qualities to the mentoring relationship regardless of the style of mentoring (Brad, 2002; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Phillips & Hendry, 1996; Tobin, 2004). Similarities between one to one mentoring and group mentoring such as exchange of ideas and information and exchange of affect and social networking are identified in the literature (Dansky, 1996). Young people will look to individual mentors for support and advice within group mentoring contexts (Phillips & Hendry, 1996). This finding by Phillips and Hendry was supported in this study where the participants did seek out one to one time with mentors, in and out of the program and usually at the school.

The mentors in their narrative raised culture, gender and developmental issues. However, while gender and culture were identified as issues to take into account in the mentoring process, the personality of the mentor was deemed to be more important. The literature supports the view that gender and culture should be taken into consideration when setting up mentor programs (Evans & Ave, 2000; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Yancey, 1998). The concept of cross cultural mentoring was supported by the comment of one mentee who stated that his attitudes towards Aborigines had changed and he stated *I changed my views towards Aborigines because I was a racist (2.10)*. This young man had been in a group that had been mentored by two Aboriginal mentors. This is supported in the literature that suggests that cross cultural mentoring can overcome many racial or cultural barriers (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Struchen & Porta, 1997).

The narrative of the mentees had been shaped by descriptions of shifts in their immediate relationships where their relationships with teachers were seen in a pejorative way. Mentors, on the other hand were seen as caring, open and non-judgmental. The immediate ecology of these adolescents had been impacted in a positive way and research emphasises an important developmental need of adolescents as having at least one significant adult in their lives to fill their need for care, belonging and connectedness (Guetzloe, 1997; Hurrelman et al., 1987).

Ecology theory, for this researcher, is viewed as more dynamic and complex than simply a nested series of levels of interaction. Intention and agency by both the learner and the learned have to be taken into account. These processes are reciprocal, intricate, and difficult to define and need another dimension or construct to interpret their presence in theory, as it appears they are certainly present in practice. Intentionality is much explored in psychodynamic theory and future research on this construct in mentoring needs to further explore this construct.

#### **Collation 4. Fortuitous encounters and Inter-subjectivity.**

Elements of the mentors themes of **the mentoring process** and **ineffability, intuition and fortuitous encounters** and mentee themes of **mentor – mentee relationship** and **shifts in experience** constitute Collation 4.

This collation is broken down into two sub-topics of i) fortuitous encounters, and ii) inter-subjectivity.

##### **i) Fortuitous encounters.**

*Totally opportunistic; chanced;* and *spontaneous* were words used by Mentor 1 and implied by the other to describe how some things happened in the mentoring process. These descriptors sum up a theme that is supported by Bandura (1986) who states that, as well as individual and environmental determinants, there are also fortuitous determinants of behaviour. Hurrelman et al. (1987) maintain that timing and synchronicity impact on the transitional space of young people. This supports the mentor claims *vis a vis* spontaneity.

Furthermore, the fortuitous determinant is somehow linked to the environmental and individual determinants (Bandura, 1986). Young people spoke about life changing experiences that, on the one hand, could be construed as chanced moments clearly linked to the mentoring process. On the other hand, these chanced moments could be interpreted as environmental determinants. One group of young mentees stated that they would not be in Year Eleven if it had not been for the mentoring program. Another mentee said he used to be a racist but now has a different perspective on Aboriginals. Yet another described the mentoring process as a new journey. Timing, synchronicity and the chanced moments all played a part in these processes.

## **ii) *Inter subjectivity.***

Two things can be said about the concept of inter subjectivity as being relevant to this study, (a) it appears to designate the psychological space of mutuality and reciprocity between mentor and mentee and (b) it seems to define another dimension of the mentoring relationship, namely identification.

**a)** The first aspect of inter subjectivity is that it has been described as ...*a shared construction of knowledge and understanding where there is a mutual shift [that] results in a viewpoint somewhere "in-between" the adult's and the child's original task definition* (Stremmel & Fu, 1993:342). Bandura (1986) suggests that learning is a reciprocal process. The notion of reciprocity in the mentoring process was supported in this study where the mentors described the process as hugely rewarding where they became better workers and people in general. The shared construction of knowledge was evidenced in the process where the mentors viewed themselves not only as having a positive influence on the lives of the mentees but where they felt that the mentees also needed to accept the mentor. Mentor 1 described at length a process of change she observed between herself and her protégé - *I can't really put my finger on it because I don't know, all I know is that I stayed and he just opened up to me ....he used to glare at me for a while, you know. And he actually got involved in activities we were doing and the next week it was the same* A profound shift had occurred for them both, yet this change was difficult to define. Inter subjective or mutual growth might be a useful construct in describing such shifts.

**b)** A second aspect of inter-subjectivity in this study is related to aspects of the other, whereby the other is somehow incorporated in a changed or new state for the mentor and mentee. *The recognition by separate beings of commonality is the central phenomena referred to in the inter-subjective dimension* (Benjamin, 1995:182). Identification is a process whereby shifts occur for the mentee and has been recognized in the literature as a possible explanation of how mentoring happens (Evans & Ave, 2000; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999).

Role modelling, for the mentors, was identified as a process through which the mentees gained trust and respect for the mentors. This was supported by the narrative of the mentees where the mentors were seen as respected and wiser others. Taking this one step further, mentor 1 and several mentees described what could be interpreted in the literature as identification. For example one mentor said *I think that can be quite helpful because, especially with 'at risk kids' ....If they bring something up and you go –yeh. I think if they sort of know that maybe you come from a similar background to them.* Two mentees stated of the mentors *he had experiences like us; and they know what you're talking about, because they've been there, they've had the experience* In psychoanalytic literature identification is viewed as the mechanism through which role modelling occurs, however, much ambiguity remains as to which might come first or how they are related (Bandura, 1986). Evans and Ave (2000) suggest that both processes operate on the basis of an emotional bond between the protégé and the mentor or role model. Research suggests that young people identify with models like themselves (MacCallum & Beltman (1999). Others claim that the *magic* of informal mentoring is a *mysterious chemical attraction between two people ...prompting them to take the risk inherent in any intensely close relationship* (Furey (1980) cited in McDonald, 2002:14).

In summary the construct of inter subjectivity was supported in the narrative of the mentors and mentees and several common themes arose out of a comparative analysis of the narratives of the mentors and mentees. These were mentor relationship and experiences of mentoring, personal agency of adolescents, ecology/context and fortuitous encounters and inter-subjectivity. The mentoring relationship is dependent upon factors such as its quality and its context. Active mentee participation as well as fortuitous encounters are determinants of how

mentoring happens. Mentoring occurs in a reciprocal and mutual sharing and construction of knowledge. Mentees narratives suggested mutuality or reciprocity *it feels like we're talking to people that's in the same situation (1.10s) they understood what we were going through and they befriended us, rather than acting like they were better than us (1.10s).*

The differences in the narratives of mentors and mentees may have been the result of the capacity of the mentors and lack of capacity of the mentees to discuss, conceptually, how mentoring occurred. The mentees were asked how mentoring worked for them and they spoke of that process in terms of what happened for them.

At risk young people due to inexperience and, perhaps more particularly because of educational risk, could be bereft of higher order analysis of their experience. They could therefore speak of their experience per se, which in this case was what happened for them. This difficulty was anticipated in the design of the study and hence several modes of expression were utilised in eliciting description of the mentoring process. Perhaps future studies could utilise deeper interview methods with young people or utilise the themes of this study to guide further examination of the central question.

This study posed the question: What occurs during the process of mentoring particularly in the interactions between mentor and mentee in an adolescent mentor program? The common mentor and mentee thematic contributions examined in this Section enable the researcher to conclude that the question, posed in this study, can be answered in this particular study context.

The next discussion answers the question, can anyone be a mentor and examines if the answer to that question contributes to understanding how mentoring occurs.

## **5.4 Section Four: Can anyone be mentor?**

This secondary question is a subset of the primary question of this study as identified in Chapter One. The rationale for examining the secondary question arose from the literature that presents evidence suggesting that mentoring can be done by *just about anyone with the patience, time and energy to empathise with and assist a young*

*person* (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999:10). Mentors can be grandparents, professionals, senior citizens, retired people, parents, as well as older peers ((MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Philip & Hendry, 1996). Two successful mentoring programs with at risk adolescents utilised parents, retired people and seniors (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999).

There are overtly simplistic views on mentoring in some of the literature (Tobin, 2004). Mentors are viewed as any caring person who can form a special relationship with young people and mentoring has been described as residing in all our hearts and is a holistic process that transforms body, mind and spirit (Dondero, 1987; Sinitar, 1999). Mentoring has also been viewed as grassroots movement and mentoring programs as having evolved by serendipity (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999).

On the other hand, despite the sense that mentoring is viewed as an unspecialised, 'any one can do it' intervention with young people, research calls for a more structured and professional approach to mentoring (McDonald, 2000). Guidelines and structures are required that relate to issues of risk management, management of volunteers, mentor screening, matching and training. Job descriptions are needed and policies and procedures around the safety of young people (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; McDonald, 2000).

The design of this study included pre- and post program interviews with the mentors where it was hoped that the juxtaposition of their pre- and post mentoring experience might determine i) whether the narrative of the trained, experienced mentor differs from that of the untrained, inexperienced mentor and, through that ii) decide whether anybody can be a mentor.

i) The central difference between the pre and post program narratives of the mentors was the quality and depth of the descriptions of mentoring processes. This will be explored in further detail in Section 5.4. The depth of the experience of the mentoring processes spoken about in the post program interviews yielded confirmation of specific processes identified in the pre program interviews.

That is, specific functions and qualities of being a mentor were highlighted and more detailed in the post program interviews. The experience of being mentors made a

qualitative difference to how these mentors perceived themselves, although this was emphasised more by mentor 2. Mentor 2 states, for example that *It also brought another dimension to how I looked and how I had to work and what I was actually offering. It became a broader – I'll just have to think of that carefully...yes, I think the expanded role was good for me as well as for the people I was working with*. Mentor 1 was less clear about the differences between role model, mentor roles and emphasised personal qualities and intuition as central to her experience of the mentoring relationship. As mentor 1 emphasised *My understanding of mentoring gets less, the more I thought I knew what mentoring was...During the program I thought I knew what mentoring was. But now – no.*

Detailed sub themes such as role modelling, trust, contextual settings and group dynamics were highlighted and elaborated on in the post program interviews. Aspects of these were mentioned in the pre program interviews. However, the quality of the experience of mentoring defined these sub themes more clearly.

Professional skills and young people as agency of their own learning were similarly emphasised in pre and post program interviews. Culture and gender of the mentor and mentee were considered important issues in the mentoring process however, personal qualities of mentors were emphasised as just as important, if not more so in both interviews. Chanced and spontaneous moments arose between mentors and mentees that suggested a special quality to the mentoring relationship.

The constructs of role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity were validated in the pre and post program narratives of the mentors, although the ineffable quality of the mentoring process was more salient in the post program interview. This quality received greater emphasis in the narrative of the female mentor than in that of the male mentor. Further research appears to be needed in relation to the differences in the narratives of the male and female mentors.

ii) The mentors' emphasis on the need for specialised skills in both pre and post program interviews is supported in the literature where such skills are viewed as imperative for people who mentor young people. The two mentors in this study identified a range of professional and interpersonal skills that helped establish good relationships with their protégés. Mentor 1 emphasised being herself as well as youth

work skills as being important. Mentor 2 emphasised youth work skills as helping to create an environment conducive for mentoring to happen between him and young people in the program.

The mentors' emphasis on the need for supportive school staff and school environments was also supported by the literature. That is, protocols and procedures for ensuring smooth running of mentor programs and safety of mentor and mentees in school setting is viewed as conducive to effective mentoring.

In summary, can anyone be a mentor? The literature suggests that if individuals possess good interpersonal qualities, training relevant to the specific mentoring context and a supportive and enthusiastic context around the program then, yes, they can be a mentor (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; McDonald, 2000). The literature is supported in the findings of this study

## 5.5 SUMMARY

This study posed the question 'What occurs during the mentoring process?' The discussion of the data in this chapter contributes to the answer of that question. The comparison of the pre and post program mentor narratives highlights the special nature of mentoring. That is, the quality of the mentoring process is dependent on specific conditions that are professional, personal and contextual. What occurs during the mentoring process is dependent on these factors and is at once structured, spontaneous and complex. Reciprocal learning and co-construction of knowledge occurs during the mentoring process. Mentoring is a meaningful experience that is intimate and rewarding for both mentor and mentee.

Four collations were derived from several key themes identified through analysis of the mentor and mentee narratives. These were -

Mentor relationship and experience.

Personal agency of YP.

Ecology/context.

Fortuitous encounters and Inter-subjectivity





Whilst elements of what constitutes the mentoring process are identified throughout the literature no single study examines that process or elements in depth. The present study's findings about the mentoring process are validated by the literature. Those findings could do with further exploration and deeper analysis (Bein, 1999; Royse, 1998). The importance of professional knowledge has been indicated in much of the literature as have issues of culture and gender. The literature on the former is less equivocal than the literature on the latter and the present study indicates further exploration of the latter at least.

Specific issues of personal agency and developmental issues of adolescence need further clarification and examining as indicated by Philip and Hendry (1996). This study has touched on these issues however did not go deeply enough into analysis of these factors to provide definite conclusions about them or their impact on the mentoring relationship. Moreover, not much literature exists around young peoples views and further studies should be considered (Philip & Hendry, 1996). The feedback from the mentees in this study was both elucidating and interesting and has provided indicators for further exploration.

Different schools provide diverse environments and those environments, both social and physical, need to be supportive of mentoring programs if the program is to be effective (Guetzloe, 1997; MacCallum and Beltman, 1999; Wassef et al., 1998). Ecology around the mentoring process, for this researcher, is viewed as more dynamic and complex than simply a nested series of levels of environment and interaction. Intention and agency by both the learner and the learned have to be taken into account. These factors are identified in issues such as agency of mentee, group dynamics, culture and gender of mentor and mentee and setting of the mentor program.

The constructs of ineffability, intuition and fortuitous encounters and inter subjectivity posed particular problems for the present study in that they were not easy to categorise. The lack of literature around these issues was not helpful in a deeper analysis of their importance. Never the less these processes were too salient and too interesting to ignore. However the literature on learning and inter and intra

psychological processes suggests that such processes exist (Stremmel & Fu, 1993; Bandura, 1986) This researcher senses that further exploration of these processes in the mentoring relationship would add significantly to our understanding of mentoring. This study has contributed to the field and added something new in this regard.

Section 5.4 addresses the question 'Can anyone be a mentor'. The literature, as with the narrative of the mentors, is equivocal on this issue (MacCallum & Belman, 1999; McDonald, 2000). On the one hand there is a sense, probably because the mentor role includes being a friend and trusted other, that anyone can be a mentor. On the other hand the literature and the mentors clearly indicate the necessity for specialised skills in mentors.

Finally, little research has been identified that brings the narratives of both mentor and mentee together in one study comparatively analysing them. In this regard the present study can be seen as unique and contributing something new to the literature on mentoring.

The final Chapter Six summarises the discussion in Chapter Five and provides a conclusion to the primary and secondary questions of this study.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6.0 CONCLUSION.



This chapter is made up of three sections.

Section One provides a conclusive summary and addresses the study questions.

Section Two delineates the limitations of the study.

Section Three examines the implications for professionals who might wish to establish or implement mentor programs and recommendations for further research are made.

### 6.1 Section One: Summary of study.

The purpose of this research was to investigate how mentoring occurs. It sought to do this through a close examination of a twelve-month youth mentoring project where several programs were delivered to students at five schools in the Perth Metropolitan and regional area. The researcher addressed the purpose of the study through the following questions as outlined in Chapter One:

The primary question of the study:

- 1) What occurs during the process of mentoring particularly in the interactions between mentor and mentee in an adolescent mentor program?

Secondary questions related to the primary question being:

- 2) What occurs in the mentoring relationship with particular attention to the constructs of role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity which are considered as explanatory of how mentoring happens.

- 3) Can anyone be a mentor?

- 4) How do mentor and mentee descriptions of the same process compare?

- 1) What occurs during the mentoring process between mentor and mentee in a specific context?

The findings of this study indicate that the process of mentoring is multi factorial, complex and diverse. Mentoring incorporates a range of varied roles such as modelling, facilitating, advising, tutoring, friendship and counselling where it can be any of, or all of these but more than the sum of them (Brad, 2002; Tobin, 2004). MacCallum and Beltman (1999) described twelve models of mentoring and Beier et al. (2000) viewed mentoring as a complex process. What occurs during that process is therefore dependent upon a number of professional and personal factors. Furthermore, mentoring is not an isolated activity but is impacted by layered contexts and it is reciprocally beneficial (Evans & Ave, 2000; Gutzeloe, 1997; Philip & Hendry, 1996). The unique contribution that this study can make to the literature on mentoring is that it pulls the above identified themes together and finds confirmation of those themes in the narratives of the mentees and mentors who participated in the study.

The narratives of the mentors and mentees revealed several key themes that indicated the complexity and multi factorial nature of what occurs during mentoring.

The compacted mentor themes were:

- 1) The mentoring process.
- 2) Professional knowledge and interpersonal skills.
- 3) Personal agency of young people.
- 4) Ecology/context.
- 5) Cultural, gender and developmental issues.
- 6) Ineffability, intuition and fortuitous encounters.

The narrative of the mentors indicates that what occurred during the mentoring process was complex and where the benefits of mentoring were two way. That is, mentors benefited from the process in personal and professional ways such as deriving personal satisfaction and becoming better workers and mentees gained life skills and grew personally. The roles of the mentors were varied and identified by the mentors as Youth Worker, mentor, role model or just themselves. Those roles included several tasks such as modelling, facilitating, teaching, advising, tutoring, and friendship. Role modelling was seen as an important way whereby mentees could access mentors. Mentor 1 felt that mentoring was too complex to describe and appeared to be unable to define mentor roles as distinctly as Mentor 2. For example where Mentor 1 would say *I think it all comes under one big – in one big group – and you just – it's like rolling*

*up pastry – just. I can't answer that, that's really difficult* Mentor 2 stated that *In all facets – I found myself able to work more as a mentor as the programs progressed.*

Professional knowledge and interpersonal skills were seen as important in how mentoring was carried out. Trust was emphasised as an important quality that needed to be cultivated in a way that invited young people into the mentoring relationship. However, the mentees were seen as arbiters in the process contributing to the quality of groups and accessing mentors, as they needed them. These elements were also identified in the literature (Pascarelli, 1998).

In line with the literature, the narrative of the mentors and mentees in this study indicated that mentoring is not an isolated activity and was impacted by several layers of the context in which the mentoring process took place (Guetzloe, 1997; MacCallum and Beltman, 1999; Wassef et al., 1998). The first layer was the immediate, micro-level of the group. The dynamics of that group impacted on how mentoring occurred for individuals within the group. The meso level of the school context impacted either positively or negatively upon the mentor process. Macro-level impacts outside of the group and school included family life and transport issues and these also could have had positive or negative impacts on the mentoring process.

The mentors felt that while cultural and gender issues were important, the personal qualities of the mentor were just as important and in some cases more important. A case for cross-cultural mentoring could be made through the findings of this study. Some female students asked for separate gender specific groups because of behavioural dynamics or sexuality issues. Both mentors saw developmental issues such as the adolescent need for at least one responsive adult in their lives as important. Thus, what occurred in the mentoring process depended on the character of the mentors and mentees and, to varying degrees, on variables such as gender and culture and developmental issues. For example Mentor 2, a male, stated that *I have had a lot of young girls access me and which seems to be an indication of the level of acceptance that I have that they would even try to discuss some of this stuff ...so it's almost as if there is an honesty and awareness between individuals and this is where I am at...especially with young people* (2). The reports in the literature on the importance of same sex, same culture mentoring were as equivocal as the findings of this study (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; Struchen & Porta, 1997). However, other

studies indicated good outcomes for protégés when culturally matched (Evans & Ave, 2000).

Fortuitous determinants such as spontaneous moments of fun and special connection between mentor and mentee occurred in the mentoring relationship *We allowed them to play and not be ridiculed in a space where they felt comfortable* (1) and *It was just totally then. I can't think of any way to say OK this is what I'm doing. One thing I did find though is letting kids do childish things, play childish games. Really weird, but like I said we played* (1).

Exact descriptions of what occurred in these moments sometimes eluded the mentors however they were seen as special encounters by both mentor and mentee. Mentoring was viewed as an inter subjective process that led to a mutual construction of knowledge and meaning between mentor and mentee. This special nature of mentoring is supported through the discussion outlined in the literature. MacCallum & Beltman (1999) suggest that *serendipidity* is one way that mentoring relationships happened and Bandura (1986) asserted that *fortuitous encounters* will also affect the course of an individual's life.

There are commonalities and differences in the female and male mentor narratives that need to be further researched. The commonalities included identification of the need for professional skills, adolescents as arbiters in their own learning and the need for supportive contexts. The difference lay in the way each mentor viewed his or her own style of operating. In the context of this study the female narrative seemed to speak of an intuitive personalised approach to mentoring where the male narrative had more of an analytical yet personalised viewing of the process. No literature was identified that specifically examined the differences in male and female mentor views of the process of mentoring and in this regard this study could be seen as providing, albeit in a minimal way, indicators for further study on this issue.

The mentee themes were:

- a) The mentor – mentee relationship.
- b) Immediate relationships – particularly with teachers.
- c) The shifts and experiences of the mentees.

Mentees viewed the relationship between mentor and mentee as a caring one where mentors were seen as advisors, friends, and teachers, respectful and non-judgemental. The mentoring process impacted upon the immediate psychosocial context of the students positively and this had a spin off effect where young people changed their attitudes towards their immediate environment. Mentees, as a result, experienced positive perceptual, attitudinal, and behavioural changes. Some of these changes were difficult to define where both mentees and mentors experienced higher order changes. The mentoring process was seen as a mutual construction of meaning and knowledge and mutual growth. The literature defines such processes of mutual growth and co-construction of meaning as intersubjectivity (Stolorow et al., 1994; Fonnan et al., 1993).

School staff viewed the program as a way for their students to overcome anger and other behavioural problems. The mentee participants in this study perceived their experiences of the mentors and the mentor process in terms different from school staff where *mentors don't judge – see past that, didn't use or show power, like teachers; They [mentors] answered differently – like the teachers just yell, the mentors didn't*. Some mentees perceived the program as a way of getting out of school and at first they were wary of it. As the aims of the program were clearly articulated to them by the mentors and as they were able to articulate their goals, they became less wary of the process and many began to see benefits for themselves. Thus, both mentors and mentees viewed mentoring as a gradual or evolving process. Some of the mentees identified shifts in their thinking as an outcome of being involved in the mentor program. The literature suggests, similarly, that adolescents look to mentors for support, advice and challenge (Phillips & Hendry, 1996).

In sum, what occurs in the process of mentoring is dynamic and cannot be observed in the positivistic sense. What occurs is personally meaningful to mentors and mentees and those meanings need to be identified, described and clarified. Because of these factors methodologies that can identify and interpret complex meanings will need to be taken into consideration in research endeavours around mentoring. The present study has attempted to provide a methodological framework suitable to the task of researching the complexity of relationships such as mentoring.

**2) What occurs in the mentoring relationship with particular attention to the constructs of role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity which are considered as explanatory of how mentoring happens.**

The literature provides several explanatory constructs including role modelling and identification to explain how social influence between mentor and mentee might occur (Dondero, 1997; Evans & Ave, 2000; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Mentor qualities and styles *vis a vis* various theoretical constructs such as role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity were identified in the narratives of the participants as useful explanations for how mentoring or social connection occurred. The differentiation between role modelling and identification is complex and not easily defined (Bandura, 1986) and the narratives of the mentors confirmed the difficulty of differentiating various mentor roles where, for example, Mentor 1 indicated that defining mentoring was *like trying to nail jelly to the wall*. Mentees suggested that mentors were *like us* and statements like this seem to imply a process of identification rather than of role modelling. An explanation for the presence of these constructs might be due to the personal and inter subjective nature of the mentoring process.

Inter subjectivity is a process that is difficult to define both conceptually and in the narratives of the mentors and mentees. Never the less it was recognisable in the narratives of the mentors and mentees through its action in the mentoring process. One mentor said *I can't really put my finger on it because I don't know; all I know is that I stayed and he just opened up to me .... He used to glare at me for a while, you know. And he actually got involved in activities we were doing*. That is, a shared or co-construction of meaning occurred between mentor and mentee where the mentor and the mentee met in a shared space or moment that was neither planned nor expected.

The literature here indicates a level of complexity beyond psychological constructs of role modelling and identification. Clearly the complexity of a process such as inter subjectivity requires a deeper level of examination than the present study can provide. The findings in this study invite further investigation into the constructs of role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity.

The constructs of role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity are drawn from several theoretical domains and note should be taken of the disparity between those



domains. The need for a conceptual guideline to assist the researcher bridge those disparities was identified in this study. One possible conceptual guideline, referred to as hermeneutical thinking is formulated at the end of Chapter Two.

### **3) Can anyone be a mentor?**

Mentoring contains a range and variety of roles including guide, supporter, one providing hope, new ideas and a caring or mature person (Pascarella, 1998; Dondero, 1997). The findings in this study are supported in the literature where it is suggested that, on the proviso that specific conditions exist, just about anyone can be a mentor (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Such conditions include mentors having good personal and interpersonal qualities; training relevant to the specific mentoring context; school staff being supportive and enthusiastic about the program; and a partnership between mentor, mentee and school staff.

As identified in the literature, mentors considered that being knowledgeable was seen as important (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; McDonald, 2000). Both mentors in this study felt strongly that youth work skills were critical to working with at risk youth. Mentor 2 said that *Mentorship verses youth worker ... I think for me one comes first. The youth work basically comes first with me. The mentorship is able to be an option after that* (2). On the other hand Mentor 1 suggested just as strongly that just *being me* and working at an intuitive level was how she worked best with this group of mentees.

The mentees felt that the mentors were unlike teachers and were *like friends* or *just like us* implying that qualities of friendship and identification were just as important as professional skills in mentorship. Research has indicated that retired people or grandparents do just as well with at risk adolescents (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Can anyone be a mentor? From the literature and this study it would appear that if individuals possess good interpersonal qualities, training relevant to the specific mentoring context and a supportive and enthusiastic context around the program that just about anyone can be a mentor (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999; McDonald, 2000).

### **4) How do mentor and mentee descriptions of the same process compare?**

A comparative analysis of mentor and mentee themes was undertaken producing several collated themes common to mentors and mentees:

1. Mentor relationship and experiences of mentoring.
2. Personal agency of young people.
3. Ecology/context.
4. Fortuitous encounters, spontaneity and Inter-subjectivity.

Themes common to mentors and mentees identified in a comparative analysis of mentor and mentee narratives were the nature of the mentor relationship; experiences of mentoring; personal agency of mentees; ecology/context; and fortuitous encounters, spontaneity and inter-subjectivity. There are, therefore, common mentor and mentee thematic contributions that assist in answering of the question of what occurs in the process of mentoring. The mentoring relationship is dependent upon factors such as the interpersonal and professional skills of the mentor, style of mentoring and the context in which the mentoring takes place. Active mentor and mentee participation as well as fortuitous encounters are determinants of what occurs in the mentoring relationship. Mentoring occurs in a reciprocal way through the mutual sharing and construction of knowledge.

A central difference between the narratives of the mentors and mentees was that the former spoke more of how they practiced mentoring. The latter spoke more of what occurred for them in the process or how mentoring was practiced with them.

The difference in the narratives of mentors and mentees was highlighted in the mentors' ability and the mentees diminished ability to discuss conceptually what happened and how mentoring occurred. The mentees were asked how mentoring worked for them and they spoke of that process in terms of what occurred for them. This difficulty was anticipated in the design of the study where a triangulation of modes of expression were utilised in eliciting a description of the mentoring process from mentees. Future studies could utilise deeper interview methods with mentees or utilise the themes of this study to guide further examination of the central question.

## **6.2 Section Two: Implications of the study.**

This study appears to highlight several implications for professionals wishing to work as mentors or to implement mentoring programs. Professionals need to understand mentor qualities and styles, contexts of mentoring, and cultural, gender and developmental issues adolescents; and multiple theoretical explanatory constructs as mechanisms of operation of how mentoring occurs.

This study suggests that mentors require specific personal and professional attributes such as non-judgmental attitudes, caring, trust, a capacity to develop rapport and to be able to read the moment of mentoring. It is important that they possess knowledge specific to their chosen area, for example, adolescent development if working with youth. They need to understand that they will be in specific roles or a combination of roles at any one point and they need to understand what those roles are. Mentors need to be able to differentiate between when the mentees are in a preparatory, supporting or exiting stage or phase of the mentoring process. However, room must be made for fun and spontaneity in the process.

Young people's immediate context and developmental stage of growth is important and professionals in that context need to be inviting and involved in the process of mentoring regardless if it is one to one or group style. School staff will need to be interested and supportive of the mentors and the program. Mentors, mentees and school staff need to be informed of protocols for participants in the programs. Procedures need to be clear. If families could be involved at some level this may assist in the consistency of the efficacy of mentoring. Personal shifts or changes for young people are not simply 'outcomes' and need to be viewed as important for them. Professionals implementing mentor programs, in any context, need to consider creating a space for protégés to talk about how the program is working for them and what effect it is having on their lives. This will help consolidate learning as it happens and help shape the program if things are not working well. The program needs to be flexible to meet the ongoing newly identified needs of mentees and mentors as the program progresses.

The participants in this study noted the need for specific gender groups at times, at other times mixed gender groups worked well. If professionals choose a group

mentoring style, group dynamics need to be considered and potential issues such as gender and cultural matching need to be identified and planned for. At least one mentee experienced changes in attitude towards Aboriginal people as a result of the mentoring process and this is important. While it is inconclusive that this change was due to having two Aboriginal mentors, it would seem, in the context of this study, that this was the case. The costs and benefits of cross-cultural mentoring need to be weighed. The mentors felt that a good program could be in place but if young people were not going to engage in it then chances of a positive experience for both mentor and mentee are diminished. It is important to provide young people with choices in selecting or accessing various mentors and having a say in the mentoring process.

The narratives in this study identified clearly that having mentors with whom mentees could identify was important. It is incumbent for professionals to understand the dynamics of the mentoring relationship with young people, particularly those with specific developmental needs and who will be undergoing a stage referred to as identity formation. That stage of development and the process of identification need to be understood more clearly by program developers. This will help professionals in the mentor matching process.

A sound conceptual understanding of constructs such as role modelling, identification, zone of proximal development and inter subjectivity would assist professionals to articulate what is going between them and their protégé. Understanding where a young person is with regards to their potential learning could help improve mentor matching, as could understanding the dynamics of role modelling. A useful role model for one protégé might not necessarily be so for another. Understanding the process of mutual co-construction of knowledge and meaning could help professionals to identify activities that facilitate the mentoring process.

### **6.3 Section Three: Limitations and recommendations.**

#### ***i) Limitations.***

The limitations to this study are similar to those outlined in the literature on constructivist hermeneutics methodologies where there is a consensus that objective validity and reliability may not be possible for studies utilising such methodologies

(Phillips, 1987; Thomas, 1981). Credibility and transparency of the study were provided through identifying and naming research biases and traceable research procedures (Garratt & Hodkinson, 1998; Hom, 1998; Tappan, 1997). Generalisability of the findings is cautioned as the size of the sample was small and there was a selection bias where the mentors were a convenience sample and not a random sample (Beier et al., 2000; Dansky, 1996). There were no control groups.

Beier et al. (2000) claim that a general limitation of cross-sectional studies is the establishment of causality. Similarly, causality *per se* in this study could not be completely established. Multi factorial contributors to how mentoring works were identified, however, it should be kept in mind that these mentors were Youth Workers. A question that could be asked is how mentors from other backgrounds or professions might have connected with these students? Furthermore, these student participants were from specific year groups and were considered at risk and they might have responded well to any adult who showed interest in them. This limitation was addressed partially in Chapter Five, Section 5.4 where the question can anyone be a mentor was answered. A further question could be asked in how might students who were not considered at risk and who came from younger or older year groups have responded?

All of the mentor programs in this study took place in community settings, specifically at schools. Yancey (1998) suggests that there are often too many confounding factors in such setting to be adequately controlled for. For example, the length, size and make up of the various groups were noted but the effects of these variables on the mentoring process were not studied.

The quality and extent of the individual and group relationships was not measured in this study. This is a limitation of this research as the literature identifies the relationship between mentor and mentee as crucial to the process of mentoring (Beier et al., 2000; Dansky, 1996; Yancey, 1998). Student participants may have been mentored on occasion by either of the mentors in this study and this variable was not taken into consideration in examining and analysing the narratives of the mentors or mentees. Never the less the question was how did mentoring *per se* work for the

participants. A survey of the findings demonstrated that the nature of the mentor relationship and aspects of that relationship were identified as important. Further studies could provide a deeper examination of the findings of this study.

Finally, several explanatory theoretical domains and constructs were identified in the literature on mentoring. It needs to be acknowledged that there is a limitation to the generalisability of these explanatory models and constructs to other scenarios, for example, in professional-to-professional or peer-to-peer mentoring situations.

## ***ii) Recommendations.***

Recommendations arising from this study for future research are:

1. The mentors in this sample were considerably diverse in terms of their gender and culture. However, future research could include a larger sample of mentors with diverse ethnic and professional backgrounds. The context of mentoring was identified as contributing to how it occurred in the context outlined in this study. Future studies might include several diverse settings such as the workplace and tertiary institutions as these settings are frequently cited in the mentoring literature. The male and female mentor narratives differed in some ways and future research might carry out comparative studies between opposite gender understandings of the mentor process.
2. The mentees in this study were at risk adolescents. It would be interesting to undertake comparative studies that included at risk and non at risk students in diverse settings. The relationship between the mentor and mentee was identified by the mentee participants in this study as being different from that with other adults. Future studies could focus more intensively on the nature of the mentoring relationship between young protégés and their mentors. This might be conducted through in depth interviews with mentees.
3. The constructs of role modelling, identification and inter subjectivity were identified as ways of explaining how mentoring happens. It seems clear that complex and dynamic processes are at play in the inter-subjective space

between the mentor and mentee. This might be due, perhaps, to the special nature of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee that can be likened to, but is also more than the sum of, friend, brother/sister, teacher, guide, advisor, role model and facilitator. The complexities of how each of these roles affects the mentoring process needs to be further studied.

4. Culture and gender issues were briefly touched on in this study. The findings here suggest that these are important issues but, as with other studies, ambiguity remains as to whether it is imperative to ethnically or racially match mentors. Gender matching was, similar to previous studies, seen as important at times in these programs. Future studies might carry out comparative cross and same culture or gender mentoring in other, similar settings.

5. Further exploration on the methodology utilised for research of the mentoring process is essential. The literature on methodologies indicates a need for a broader reading of the data beyond the confines of a behaviourally objectified 'results' method typically referred to as a positivist approach. This study asks 'how does mentoring happen'. Hughes puts forward the assertion that *what is missing from positivistic explanations ...is demonstration of how the action in question is accounted for and explained by the person or persons involved... The social world therefore needs to be investigated in terms of meanings and actions rather than causes and effect* (Hughes, 1998:23). The problem for much research on mentoring is that a purely behavioural or positivistic analysis and description of the data has typically fallen short in describing meanings for mentors and mentees.

In conclusion, this study has begun an exploration into what occurs between mentor and mentee in a specific context. Mentoring is a complex process within which the mentors, mentees, and context all play interrelated roles. This study has identified the interrelatedness of these roles and suggests that one of the central purposes of mentoring is the transmission of learning from an experienced or more learned person to a less learned other. How that actually occurs has been examined in this

study through an in depth examination of a small groups of mentors and mentees interacting within a specific context. Even though the sample is small and the context is confined, the findings of this study appear to be validated in the literature surrounding mentoring. This study has identified the need for further research in order to better understand this exciting and complex process.



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# APPENDIX ONE

## Mentor Consent Form

**Dear Mentors**

### ADOLESCENT AND INTERACTIVE MENTOR (AIM) PROGRAM

AIM is a twelve month pilot funded by the Lotteries Commission of WA and run by the Northeast Community Drug Service Team in Midland. This is a life skills program designed to provide young people with self-help and problem solving skills. It is generally run over a six week period at the participating school for one or two hours per week. At the end of the program it is anticipated that the participants will:

- Have a better sense of themselves and their involvement with the community.
- Take more responsibility for their own behaviours

It is also anticipated that an evaluation of the program, which I will be undertaking simultaneously, will assist professionals to understand the best way to work with young people in our community.

The AIM program will be fully evaluated as part of our responsibility to the Lotteries Commission and so that we can determine how best to make improvements for future programs.

Your contribution, through running the programs is, of course, critical. To enhance the evaluation of the program I seek to carry out two interviews with you, one earlier in the project timeline and the other at the end of the pilot project time (around eight months from now). In order to carry out the interviews we require written consent from you.

As you are aware, the AIM program will run in two stages.

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Stage 1:  | Participation within the weekly program for six weeks.   |
| Stage 11: | Participation in a follow up study that will form a part of a Master Social Science research thesis towards the end of 2001. |

In Stage 1 youth participants will be asked to complete two questionnaires at the beginning and the end of the AIM program.

In Stage 11 participants will be asked to be part of a follow up study to determine how their participation in the AIM program assisted in meeting the outcomes of the study. This participation will take the form of focus groups to be held at the school.

Attached to this letter is the consent form. We ask that you read through this letter carefully before signing. If you do not understand any part of this letter please contact myself at the following number [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. To ensure that every response is confidential the interviews will be coded so that they can be matched but no identifying names will be used. All documents will be kept secure at the Northeast Metropolitan Community Drug Service Team office and will be destroyed when the program project is completed.

Thank you for your time, consideration and co-operation with the undertaking of this program.

Chris Konrad, Coordinator AIM Program.  
Adolescent and Interactive Mentor (AIM) Program.

### **MENTORS: CONSENT FORMS.**

Please complete the following Consent Form and return it to the AIM coordinator.

At any time you may decline to answer any questions. You are also free to withdraw consent at any time and cease participation in the Master Social Science research.

I give permission to be interviewed and for these interviews to be tape recorded. I understand that only the researcher will have access to the data obtained, and that there will be no identifying evidence on disks, cassettes or transcripts. I also understand that the information may be published, but my name will not be associated with the research.

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX TWO

### Participant Consent Form (Student/Parent)

**Name: Mr Christopher Konrad**

**Supervisor: Dr Vicki Banham**

**Edith Cowan University**

**Tel: (08) 94005530**

**Program: Master of Social Science**

### ADOLESCENT AND INTERACTIVE MENTOR (AIM) PROGRAM

AIM is a twelve month pilot funded by the Lotteries Commission of WA and run by the Northeast Community Drug Service Team in Midland. This is a life skills program designed to provide young people with self-help and problem solving skills. It is generally run over a six week period at the participating school for one or two hours per week. At the end of the program it is anticipated that the participants will:

- Have a better sense of themselves and their involvement with the community.
- Take more responsibility for their own behaviours

It is also anticipated that an evaluation of the program, which I will be undertaking simultaneously, will assist professionals to understand the best way to work with young people in our community.

This evaluation study forms part of my requirements for my Master Social Science award.

The AIM program will be fully evaluated as part of our responsibility to the Lotteries Commission and so that we can determine how best to make improvements for future programs.

Your daughter/son has volunteered for the AIM program at their school. In order for them to participate in the program we require written consent from their parents or guardians.

The AIM program will run in two stages.

Stage 1: Participation within the weekly program for six weeks.

Stage 11: Participation in a follow up study towards the end of 2001.

In Stage 1 your child will be asked to complete two questionnaires at the beginning and the end of the AIM program.

In Stage 11 your child will be asked to be part of a follow up study to determine how their participation in the AIM program assisted in meeting the outcomes of the study. This participation will take the form of focus groups to be held at the school.

Attached to this letter is the consent form. We ask that you read through this letter carefully before signing for your daughter/son participation in the AIM program. If you do not understand any part of this letter please contact myself at the following number [REDACTED]. To ensure that every response is confidential the questionnaires will be coded so that they can be matched but no identifying names will be used. All documents will be kept secure at the Northeast Metropolitan Community Drug Service Team office and will be destroyed when the program project is completed.

Thank you for your time, consideration and co-operation with the undertaking of this program.

Chris Konrad, Coordinator AIM Program.

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (STUDENT/PARENT)****Adolescent and Interactive Mentor (AIM) Program.****Name: Mr Christopher Konrad****Supervisor: Dr Vicki Banham****Edith Cowan University****Tel: (08) 94005530****Program: Master of Social Science****School:****CONSENT FORMS.**

Please complete the following Consent Form and return it with your child to their AIM program facilitators.

- 1 I give permission for my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ to attend the AIM program and complete the questionnaires applied at the beginning and end of the program.

**Please circle yes or no**

**YES**

**NO**

2. I give permission for my daughter/son \_\_\_\_\_ to attend the AIM program follow up focus groups towards the end of 2001, should they wish to.

*Please circle yes or no.*

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to telephone Dr Vicki Banham on (08) 94005530

Full name of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX THREE

### Guiding Questions for the Interviews with the Two Mentors.

#### Pre-pilot program interview

You are a youth worker. Do you think that there are any differences between being a youth worker and the role of mentor? What are these differences?

Are there any qualities you feel make a difference or enhance the relationship with young people?

What do you think is helpful in the way kids take things in (like new behaviours)?

Do you think that the way we, as adults, are with kids makes any difference to the way that they take things in?

In your opinion, are there any differences between role modelling and mentoring? Is the social environment important? How?

#### Post-pilot program interview

You have worked specifically as a mentor for the last X months. What has that experience been like for you?

You spoke about certain qualities that enhance the relationship with kids. Have you anything to add to that now?

After working intensively as a mentor for over twelve months, do you think that there are things that you did, in that role, that made a difference to the kids you worked with?

What are some things you can say, after this experience as mentor, about the way kids take things in?

Can you comment on role modelling, social environment or mentoring, with the experience of hindsight?



## APPENDIX FOUR

### Transcript coding sample.

Verbatim narrative from mentor final interviews	In vivo coding Tentative categories
<p>But they weren't initiating or encouraging this sort of hostile reaction from them and therefore they felt that sense of power over the situation without having to resort to violence. And also around their drug usage, it sort of wasn't necessarily – it certainly went through a metamorphosis – some kids made some pretty conscious changes. One chose to give up cigarettes and pot and then found that he had alienated himself from his peer group so much that what he did was, he didn't want to take up potting again because it made him paranoid and violent – he continued to smoke cigarettes so he could be out there inhaling – so he was a part of the group formation, following the same sorts of patterns, joining in the same sorts of things but he wasn't indulging in the same substance (2).</p> <p>I didn't actually – this is going to sound weird – but I didn't actually think of – I was just [me] in there. Because for a start I didn't have any official mentoring skills, I didn't have any qualifications at the time so I think I just went in there with what I knew. I couldn't help but be a youth worker because that's what I am. When I was there I wasn't actually thinking about what role I was there as, other than my job but it just came because I had done three years of work with kids. Before I started it was really hard to distinguish what role I was in. I knew I was in the mentor role because that was my job (1).</p>	<p><i>Adolescents as agency in own learning.*</i></p> <p><i>Adolescent developmental needs</i> <i>eg. To belong, peers, group issues</i></p> <p><i>Mentor role –</i> <i>Just being me V's job role</i></p> <p><i>Youth worker skills</i></p> <p><i>Youth work experience</i> <i>Role as indefinable</i></p> <p>* Themes were derived from numerous categories, in bold, which were derived from the in vivo coding of significant statements in italics.</p>

## APPENDIX FIVE.

### Sample of Photo language used by students in feedback groups



Taken from Cooney, J. & Burton, K. (1986) *Photo Language Australia: Human Values*.  
Catholic Education Office: Sydney

## **APPENDIX SIX**

### **AIM PROGRAM EVALUATION SHEET**

1. Did the AIM program help you at all in any way?    Yes    No

2. How do you think it worked for you?

3. Are mentors different from other adults? If so how?